

METHUEN

American Literature
in Context II: 1830-1865

BRIAN HARDING

Focusing on the ways in which conceptions of freedom affected their ideas of human potentiality and views of the American nation, this volume examines the works of twelve major American writers of the three decades before the Civil War. In addition to great literary figures like Hawthorne, Poe, Emerson, Thoreau, Melville and Whitman (the work of two historians, a journalist and Abraham Lincoln are discussed).

256 pages
Hardback 0416 739008 £9.95
Paperback 0416 739105 £4.50

American Literature
in Context IV: 1900-1930

ANN MASSA

Ann Massa shows how American literature confronted the challenges of the period 1900-1930 and threw down challenges of its own in the works of, among others, James, Pound, Stein, O'Neill, Fitzgerald, Jean Toomer and Edith Wharton. While most Americans sought escape, these writers confronted their reality, thus providing an extremely rich and varied literature that reflects these turbulent years in American life.

216 pages
Hardback 0416 739202 £9.95
Paperback 0416 73930X £4.50

Understanding News

JOHN HARTLEY

Studies in Communication

News, especially on television, is the point of contact between people and politics, between the home and the public world of debate and decision. *Understanding News* starts from the perspective of the individual who watches or reads the news. It shows how news is constructed, not as a product so much as a 'language' of meanings, values, codes and conventions by which we, as consumers are encouraged to make sense of the world.

224 pages
Hardback 0416 745407 £8.95
Paperback 0416 745504 £3.95

Local Government

Politicians, professionals and the public in local authorities.

HOWARD ELCOCK

with a chapter by MICHAEL WHEATON

This book presents local government as a series of political systems each with its own political and administrative culture. The perennial controversy over central-local relations is seen as a continuing struggle between organizations all of which possess extensive legal and financial powers and can claim a grant of legitimacy from the electorate. Against this background the work of councillors and officers is examined and an analysis is undertaken of the functions of, and the services provided by local authorities.

342 pages
Hardback 0416 857507 £11.95
Paperback 0416 83170X £5.95

The Victorian Economy

FRANÇOIS CROUZET

In this richly documented study, François Crouzet analyses the economy of Victorian Britain, drawing on an immense amount of quantitative data to examine and explain the economic developments that occurred during this extraordinary era. The book is divided into two parts, the first being a macroeconomic survey of the period and the second goes on to look in detail at the different sectors of the economy.

448 pages
Hardback 0416 310005 £18.00
Paperback 0416 311202 £7.95

The Ancient Theatre

ERIKA SIMON

This is the first English translation of Professor Simon's *Das Antike Theater*, originally published in 1972 and now revised and updated. The book is a clear, concise and scholarly study of the production of classical drama, drawn both from literary sources and from the evidence from extant Greek and Roman theatres and other archaeological material. The book is well illustrated with sixteen pages of plates.

80 pages
Hardback 0416 325203 £6.95
Paperback 0416 325300 £2.95

All prices are net in the UK only.



THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

PO Box 7, 200 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EZ

JUNE 11 1982

Art History 645	Fiction 642, 643
Biography and Drama 644	French History 646
Biology 629-30	Italy 632
Commentary 636-38	Latin Literature 634
Eastern Europe 640-41	Literary Criticism 627-28, 647
English History 631	Poetry 633
Politics 635	

INDEX OF BOOKS REVIEWED

ASALS, HEATHER S. R. <i>Equivocal Predication</i> [Raman Selden]	647
ASCHERSON, NEAL <i>The Polish August</i> [Abraham Brumberg]	640-41
ATKINS, MEG ELIZABETH <i>Palimpsest</i> [Keith Jeffery]	642
ATWOOD, MARGARET <i>Bodily Harm</i> [Peter Kemp]	643
BANVILLE, JOHN <i>The Newton Letter</i> [Alan Brownjohn]	643
BIRCH, CHARLES, and COBB, JOHN B. <i>The Liberation of Life: From the cell to the community</i> [Stephen Clark]	630
<i>The Book of Lech Walesa</i> [Abraham Brumberg]	640-41
BURY, J. P. T. <i>Gambetta's Final Years</i> [Maurice Larkin]	646
CARM, T. (Editor and Translator) <i>The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse</i> [M. L. Rosenthal]	642
CONDON, RICHARD <i>Prizzi's Honour</i> [Alan Bold]	642
CONTI, BRUNO, and MORINO, ALBA (Editors) <i>Sibilla Aleramo e il suo tempo</i> [Masolino d'Amico]	632
DANEMAN, MEREDITH <i>The Groundling</i> [Linda Taylor]	643
DOLGOPOLOVA, Z. (Editor) <i>Russia Dies Laughing: Jokes from Soviet Russia</i> [Kyril FitzLyon]	641
DUDLEY EDWARDS, RUTH <i>Corridors of Death</i> [Keith Jeffery]	642
ESSICK, ROBERT N., and PALBY, MORTON D. <i>Robert Blair's 'The Grave'</i> [Raymond Lister]	645
GARTON, ASH, TIMOTHY <i>Willst du nicht mein Bruder sein? Die DDR heute</i> [Daniel Johnson]	641
HARVEY, WILLIAM <i>Disputations touching the Generation of Animals</i> [Martin Pollock]	629-30
HATFIELD, MICHAEL <i>Spy Fever</i> [Keith Jeffery]	642
HEALY, DERMOT <i>Banished Misfortunes</i> [Patricia Craig]	642
HEATH-STUBBS, JOHN <i>Naming the Beasts</i> [George Squires]	633
HOLT, J. C. <i>Robin Hood</i> [R. H. Hilton]	631
HULBE, CLARK <i>Metamorphic Verse</i> [Katherine Duncan-Jones]	647
HUTTON, PATRICK H. <i>The Cult of the Revolutionary Tradition: The Blanquists in French Politics, 1864-1893</i> [Steven Englund]	646
JEFFERSON, ANN, and ROBBY, DAVID (Editors) <i>Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction</i> [Christopher Norris]	643
LAGO, MARY (Editor) <i>Burne-Jones Talking. His Conversations 1895-1898</i> [Mary Lutyens]	645
MCGILCHRIST, IAIN <i>Against Criticism</i> [C. J. Rawson]	627-28
MACSHANE, DENIS <i>Solidarity: Poland's Independent Trade Union</i> [Abraham Brumberg]	640-41
MONDOK, HENRI, and AUSTIN, LLOYD JAMES (Editors) <i>Stéphane Mallarmé: Correspondance. VI, Janvier 1893-Juillet 1894; VII, Juillet 1894-Décembre 1895</i> [J. M. Cocking]	628
MONTI, RICHARD C. <i>The Dido Episode and the Aeneid: Roman Social and Political Values in the Epic</i> [Erich Segal]	634
ORR, JOHN <i>Tragic Drama and Modern Society</i> [Brian Rotman]	644
PASTERNAK, BORIS <i>Zhenia's Childhood</i> [Henry Gifford]	642
PUTNAM, MICHAEL C. T. <i>Essays on Latin Lyric, Elegy, and Epic</i> [Richard Stoneman]	632
NORWICH, JOHN JULIUS <i>Venice: The Greyness and the Fall</i> [Nicholas Davidson]	640-41
RAJNA, PETER <i>Independent Social Movements in Poland</i> [Abraham Brumberg]	640-41
ROE, SHIRLEY A. <i>Matter, Life, and Generation: Eighteenth-century embryology and the Haller-Wolff debate</i> [Martin Pollock]	629-30
ROB, SUE <i>Estella: Her Expectations</i> [Rosemary Jackson]	631
SILVER, ARNOLD <i>Bernard Shaw: The Darker Side</i> [Stanley Weintraub]	644
SZCZYPIORSKI, ANDRZEJ <i>The Polish Ordeal: The View from Within</i> [Abraham Brumberg]	640-41
TAYLOR, JOHN <i>Five Months with Solidarity</i> [Abraham Brumberg]	640-41
TOMBS, ROBERT <i>The War Against Paris, 1871</i> [Eugene Schulkind]	646
VALE, MICHAEL (Editor) <i>Poland: the State of the Republic</i> [Abraham Brumberg]	640-41
WATSON, ADAM <i>Diplomacy</i> [Hedley Bull]	635
WITT, PETER N., and ROYNER, JEROME S. (Editors) <i>Spider Communication: Mechanisms and Ecological Significance</i> [John Cloudsley-Thompson]	630
WOOD, CHRISTOPHER <i>The Pre-Raphaelites</i> [Kate Flint]	645
COMMENTARY	
Cinema: <i>Britannia Hospital</i> (ABC Cinema, Shaftesbury Avenue) [Andrew Hislop]	637
<i>An Unsuitable Job for a Woman</i> (Gate Cinema, Notting Hill Gate) [Robin Buss]	636
Opera: <i>L'Amour des Trois Oranges</i> (Glyndebourne) [Peter Conrad]	636
Theatre: <i>Aeschylus' Persae</i> (Bradfield College) [Oliver Taplin]	638
<i>From the Balcony</i> (Cottesloe Theatre) [Patricia Craig]	638
<i>The Understudy</i> (Strand Theatre) [Harold Hobson]	637
John Cage at seventy (Twitford Mellers)	637
Author, Author	637
Fifty years on	637
Aldous Huxley on war and intellectual survival [Naomi Mitchison]	635
Poems by Alan Dwyer, D. J. Enright, R. D. Lancaster	633, 628, 631
Letters on the Harris Case, 'The Mathematical Experience', and 'In Memoriam'	633, 628, 631

LITERARY CRITICISM

Whole works and partial truths

C. J. Rawson

IAN MCGILCHRIST

Against Criticism
271pp, Faber. £12.50.
0371 119220

This book is dedicated to the proposition that criticism is a self-defeating activity, whose procedures of 'analysis and classification' by definition elude the irreducible totality of the works it applies itself to. Its only possible success is indirect, not because indirectness is 'more subtle', but because no other approach to its object exists. . . . Criticism works by a denial, not by an assertion, of itself.

'Against criticism': the title means what it says, and not just about critics Iain McGilchrist doesn't like, but about all criticism as such. But it also means the opposite of what it says, because cunning circumventions of its predicament are happily available. These are said to involve renunciation of the critic's analytical tools, though it is not always easy to see in what way McGilchrist himself can be said to have renounced them, especially in his chapter on Wordsworth. It may be that the excellence of the result is to be taken as in itself a transcendence of limitations; or that his highly personal but entirely traditional style of pithy description and adjudication is felt to be sufficiently non-analytic, or non-classifying. Either way, criticism is said to work only in opposition to its own methods. Thus 'the title can be read in two ways', and McGilchrist has written a book of criticism. Though the title doesn't say so, the larger part of the book consists of critical essays on Johnson, Sterne and Wordsworth.

Many of McGilchrist's assumptions derive from Romantic and post-Romantic poetics, though Heraclitus (and some Eastern sages) are invoked as authorities. To state a meaning is to alter it, and 'direct statement' is not only incomplete but 'misses the mark entirely'. Hence his interest, both in art and in discourse about art, in the logical gap, free of connective clutter and pregnant with unspoken significance, in silence, 'the interstices and vibrant spaces' between words. It is no accident that two of his three authors, Sterne and Wordsworth, have a deep interest in the potentialities of wordless communication.

The third, Johnson, was, on the contrary, one of the most explicit and indeed sententious authors in the language. But McGilchrist suggests that Johnson's predilection for the *sententia* and his love of aphorism are themselves signs of devotion to the wordless elements in any assertion of truth. Aphorism is a mode of expression especially given to creating 'alliances' around itself.

By their reticence, by confining, that is, what they actually say, and yet at the same time lending that partial statement an appearance of general application and finally, epigrams are peculiarly suitable to Johnson's needs. The cultivation of a Baconian epigram goes hand in hand with his disapproval of parenthesis. Parenthesis destroys the all-important sense of finality: it introduces qualifying material, which expands the area of reference, and simultaneously contravenes the authority of the statement.

The point is well made. There are, of course, finalities and finalities. Qualification and parenthesis are favourite tools of Henry James and of P. R. Leavis, both of them, in their way as dogmatic as Johnson and as much given to uncompromisingly registering utterance. For James especially, qualification and elaboration were part of the density of truth, not an attenuation. They often seem as irreducible as the 'main' statement, and aspire to exhaustive definition, however unattainable, where Johnson (and McGilchrist) prefer to see partial statement held momentarily in a total view. For Leavis, parenthesis can act not as a qualifier but as a crypto-intensive, as in the famous comment on Sterne's 'responsible' (and 'nasty') trifling.

The finality is that of the imperious pedagogue. Johnson had more of this than of James's analytic elaboration. But he differs from both in his principled wilfulness, his readiness to assert contradictory opinions with equal conviction, his 'sober recognition' of diversity as a philosophical fact.

McGilchrist is right to suggest that such things 'stem not from the unsettled condition of Johnson's character, but from the partial nature of all truth'. The striking truth of the immediate mood, the knock-down assertion of some literally obvious phenomenon which seems to make nonsense of a larger statement, were Johnson's way of making vivid to himself and to others facts which had every right to be taken singly and without reference to the more systematic body of knowledge or belief into which, on another plane, they might need to be fitted. I do not think Johnson regarded aphorisms as a sort of conceptual counterpart of the Imagists' 'image', and he certainly wanted his 'facts' to be referable to a larger coherence. But larger integrations were laborious and took time, and risked delaying the excavation of the 'facts' themselves. McGilchrist quotes this wonderfully revealing remark to Boswell:

I love anecdotes. I fancy mankind may come in time to write all aphoristically, except in narrative; grow weary of preparation and connexion and illustration and all those arts by which a big book is made. If a man is to wait till he weaves anecdotes into a system, we may be long in getting them, and get but few in comparison of what we might get.

This seems, remarkably, to be predicting a later tradition of aphoristic utterance, of which the masters were to include Blake, Nietzsche, and the Wallace Stevens who wrote prose 'Adagias' and poems called 'Anecdotes' ('anecdotes' being presumably to the narrative mode what aphorisms are to the conceptual). But Johnson, whose own 'sententious' style is normally part of a continuous discourse, would never have wished to resemble any of these. The aphoristic tradition he knew about was a rationalist rather than an intuitionist one, that of his admirer, Bacon, or of La Rochefoucauld. But above all, as McGilchrist says, his 'accent is practical'. The third, Johnson, was, on the contrary, one of the most explicit and indeed sententious authors in the language. But McGilchrist suggests that Johnson's predilection for the *sententia* and his love of aphorism are themselves signs of devotion to the wordless elements in any assertion of truth. Aphorism is a mode of expression especially given to creating 'alliances' around itself.

By their reticence, by confining, that is, what they actually say, and yet at the same time lending that partial statement an appearance of general application and finally, epigrams are peculiarly suitable to Johnson's needs. The cultivation of a Baconian epigram goes hand in hand with his disapproval of parenthesis. Parenthesis destroys the all-important sense of finality: it introduces qualifying material, which expands the area of reference, and simultaneously contravenes the authority of the statement.

The point is well made. There are, of course, finalities and finalities. Qualification and parenthesis are favourite tools of Henry James and of P. R. Leavis, both of them, in their way as dogmatic as Johnson and as much given to uncompromisingly registering utterance. For James especially, qualification and elaboration were part of the density of truth, not an attenuation. They often seem as irreducible as the 'main' statement, and aspire to exhaustive definition, however unattainable, where Johnson (and McGilchrist) prefer to see partial statement held momentarily in a total view. For Leavis, parenthesis can act not as a qualifier but as a crypto-intensive, as in the famous comment on Sterne's 'responsible' (and 'nasty') trifling.

The common end of all narrative, nay, of all, Poems is to convert a series into a Whole: to make those events, which in real or imagined history move on in a strait Line, assume to our Understandings a circular motion - the snake with its Tail in its Mouth.

McGilchrist cites these words by Coleridge in his essay on Wordsworth. The integration envisaged in the old image of the snake and its tail suggests a greater degree of schematism than McGilchrist (or for that matter Coleridge) would normally want. The emphasis is on a point of rest, the moment of what Stevens called 'arrested peace', and McGilchrist quotes Wordsworth's 'Calm is all nature as a resting wheel', which 'combines the image of circularity with that of suspension'. When McGilchrist asserts that 'progress to truth is not linear, but continually circling and searching its own origins' he comes very close to Stevens on

the merely going round; Until merely going round is a final good. The way wine comes at a table in a wood.

This too envisages points of rest, the 'table in a wood', returning to its original element, plus the pleasure of wine. But it is valued as a momentary conclusiveness, a finality 'for a moment final' arrived at with the sudden shock of the *trouvaille* or find: like a circling bird in Stevens suddenly coming down, swooping (rather than, so to speak, stooping) to truth. The find, to vary the metaphor, becomes in a favourite phrase of McGilchrist's a *leap* of imagination.

Like much critical thinking of a neo-Romantic cast, McGilchrist's argument hankers tacitly and ideally after the short poem, where instantaneously totalities are more readily apprehended. Circle or no circle, we experience literature in a 'linear' way in the sense that it takes time to read any text and that we usually do so consecutively from page 1 onwards. Some Romantics were actively troubled by this circumstantial or even biological inconvenience. Poe tried to work out the optimum length for a poem, and he and others shrank, in theory at least, from long poems.

McGilchrist's book is in fact concerned not with short poems but with extended texts in verse and prose, and he proposes a way of describing such works which may seem to derive from novelists as much as from poetic theorists. Books, like persons, are complex, multifarious, 'inconsistent'. A person may be 'undogmatic' and also 'assertive', 'original', yet 'sceptical of all innovations', and in addition to these apparent contradictions possessed of 'a sense of humour which transforms each of his qualities individually'. How do you get each item of the description in, in such a way as to let each feature appear with a due awareness of the other features which complicate or contradict it? The formulation recalls Ford Madox Ford's account of the strategies of portraiture he and Conrad 'evolved' in preference to the simple chronological unfolding they deplored in British fiction. In getting to know people in real life, he says,

You never do go straight forward. You meet an English gentleman at your golf club. He is beefy, full of health, the moral of the boy from an English Public School of the finest type. You discover, gradually, that he is hopelessly neurotic, dishonest in matters of small change, but unexpectedly self-sacrificing, a dreadful liar but a most painfully careful student of lepidoptera and, finally, from the public prints, a bigamist who was once, under another name, hampered on the Stock Exchange. . . . Still, there he is, the beefy, full-fed fellow, moral of an English Public School product. To get such a man in fiction you could not begin at his beginning and work his life chronologically to the end. You must first get him in with a strong impression and then work backwards and forwards over his past.

Ford's account, however schematic and exemplary, has a primary vitality of human portraiture naturally lacking in the critical adjectival abstractions, a difference which McGilchrist might cheerfully admit as showing the natural intimacy of the critical enterprise. Another difference is that Ford's passage presupposes a diversity that remains to some extent unsynthesized, whereas McGilchrist envisages some national state in which each descriptive term is charged with an awareness of all the others: 'Clearly, in order to justify using - and to sophisticate the very meaning of - any one term, we will need to bring all the others to bear on it.'

These models both seem to be concerned with portraiture by impressionist glimpses, 'a few notes'. What happens when a fuller picture, 'reasonably fair and detailed', is required? The same difficulty arises of where to say what: 'how do we get the reader to appreciate what we are going to tell him at the end while he is lacking the beginning?' The novelists have puzzled themselves over this one too, including the chief novelist studied in this book, Sterne:

... if I reserve it for either of those parts of my story, I ruin the story upon - and if I tell it here - I anticipate matters, and ruin it there.

Like Sterne and like Ford, McGilchrist reports that the descriptive process is 'not in a straight line'. It operates by 'reverberation, back and forth, reassessing what we thought we already knew'. But the two novelists seem happy for the necessary diversities to unfold themselves in time, whereas the critic seems both to yearn for an impossible ideal of simultaneity and at the same time take pleasure in an I-told-you-so declaration of this impossibility. Bringing the whole portrait into focus 'cannot be done explicitly at all, for every phrase would have literally to contain the entire text'. What begins as an approach seemingly modelled on the novelists ends up by making demands which have no real distance of being met except in a short poem. Or perhaps not ever there. The reader

needs to stand outside the linear process of description and take the whole thing in at once, as one tries to do with a painting - which is perhaps why we are fond of speaking of a portrait when referring to a verbal description of character.

Paintings have the advantage over even the shortest poem of appearing whole in 'no time at all', and the impossibility of experiencing the literary text in this way provides McGilchrist with an almost ostentatiously unsatisfied longing. He insists everywhere on the irreducibility of the work of art, but the book's whole argument shrinks from its own logical conclusion, by implying that there is a sense in which the irreducible object is also a fixed totality, like a picture on the wall, which the critic aspires to grasp. The rich untidiness of all true readings, which the book celebrates very eloquently, is in one

sense more effectively suggested by Denis Donoghue's model, in his recent book *Ferocious Alphabets*, of an ever uncompleted dialogue between author and reader.

It is a model which brings Sterne to mind, and Sterne, contemplating the impossibility of getting everything in at once, takes that impossibility on board as itself part of the subject of his novel. The overt authorial interference masquerades as a pretended helplessness to control the flow of experience, where Ford might pretend non-interference and exercise covert control. Sterne's sharings of his authorial self would normally seem an intolerable self-indulgence if practised by a critic (some find them intolerable in Sterne himself), but they dramatize the heaving untidiness of both event and perception beyond all talk of 'portraits', well-wrought urns, or even Grecian ones, McGilchrist says:

His museum contains not the Attic vase, that unravished bride, but the unkissed maiden upon it. His journey provides him with the exhibition space for many such moments: indeed the *filles de chambre*, with which by chance his journey ends, is like Keats's girl, an ecstasy of promised fulfillment. 'For ever warm, and still to be enjoyed'.

The point he rightly makes is that the unconsummated kiss in the *filles de chambre* episode is an event (or non-event) in the narrative, and not a posture frozen for contemplation by the narrator in a pre-existing ariette. But the episode is really very unlike, and it is interesting that McGilchrist's thoughts should turn so readily to Keats's poem (actually a much finer thing-in-my-view). Sterne's episode becomes for McGilchrist the reader what the urn was for Keats the narrator, a definitive crystallization of the unfinished, and thus I suspect one of those places

New from Dent

Henry James:
Selected TalesSelected by
PETER MESSENT and
TOM PAULIN

A substantial selection of some of the best and most representative of Henry James's tales, many of which have long remained unavailable to the general reader. Everyman Paperback £2.78

A Killing Frost
CHRISTOPHER LEACH

A compelling new novel which might have been written by a commuter in the first few weeks of 1982. Six people find themselves sharing the same carriage in a snow-bound train which has come to a halt between rural stations. As the light and heating inside fails and the tension in the carriage grows. £7.80

new in the 'Master
Musicians' seriesDufay
DAVID FALLOWS

A comprehensive and highly important study - the first since 1923 - throwing new light on Dufay's life and works and giving a very full picture of fifteenth-century music as a whole. Illustrated with 80 music examples and 12 pages of photographs. 24 June £9.95

Moll Flanders

DANIEL DEFOR
new introduction by
PAT ROGERS

A remarkable imaginative feat, this tale is infused with the spirit of eighteenth-century England and of its heroine's own indomitable character. In his new introduction Professor Rogers discusses critical reactions to the novel from its own time to the present day and places it in the context of Defoe's life and his other major works. An Everyman Paperback 15 July £1.50

Modern
Short Stories 2:
1940-80Selected and introduced by
GILES GORDON

A marvellous new collection of thirty-one short stories from many of the greatest modern writers in the English language, including L. P. Hartley, Sean O'Faolain, Graham Greene, Samuel Beckett, Angus Wilson, Muriel Spark and Doris Lessing. A splendid sequel to John Haffield's bestselling MODERN SHORT STORIES. Everyman Paperback 29 July £1.90

DENT
33 Welbeck Street,
London W1

where the critic may with particular aptness feel himself taking a whole view of an arrested part.

McGilchrist has many memorable things to say about Sterne. On the same page he wonderfully describes an utterance of Tristram's as "a rapture of decay". He has a vivid sense of Sterne's preoccupation with death, and the paradoxical "vitality" of his treatment of it. I know no recent critic who has written better on the theme of "impotence" in *Tristram Shandy*: on the buoyancy of Sterne's dealings with a perpetual and comic self-defeat; on the "self-consciousness" seen not as a play of neurotic exuberance, still less as an "experimental" demonstration of the literary nature of living, but as a zest for experience which becomes (if one may put it so) more expansive the more it turns inward. "The spirit of Falstaff is the presiding genius of *Tristram Shandy*, far more so than that of Yorick": this insight, and the entire comparison with Falstaff, seems to me the brilliantly and sensitively observed, one of the finest things in the book.

The chapter on Wordsworth is a somewhat different exercise, much concerned with verbal technique: with Wordsworth's use of prepositions, his fondness for comparative forms ("later" is used much more often than "late" or "latest" in *The Prelude*) or the double negative. Statistical word-counts play a modest part, but the exercise seems to owe more to some of Christopher Rick's

work than to the routines of modern stylistics, and produces valuable perceptions about Wordsworth's awareness of existence between "converse" and "intercourse". About Coleridge's comment that Wordsworth "feels for, but never with" his characters; about Wordsworth's use of "along" in "Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart", a line of "ageless familiarity" in which "the preposition lends an odd extension to the idea of the heart, as though it were a space to move in."

On Johnson, and to some extent on Sterne, McGilchrist offers us a generalized portrait of the authors' total œuvre. It is only in the chapter on Wordsworth that he makes a point of isolating a single work, *The Prelude*, and even here the choice seems designed less to show the application of his critical method to a particular poem than to use that poem as an opening into the larger character of its author. The method and the emphasis are those of an honourable essayistic tradition (quasi-aphoristic in the manner of Hazlitt rather than of Blake - or, for that matter, of Bucon) which looks for wholehearted human fact. It goes without saying that he hasn't much time for that autonomous and metallic creature, parthenogenetically spawned and polysemically spawning, which sometimes attracts to itself the name of "text" in one of that word's more cheerlessly honorific senses. The abstractionist ministrations of

critics who avoid "personal judgment" are seen as a refrigerated form of self-pleasuring, an ego-boasting power-game played in a vacuum "while ordinary people... continue to imagine that art really has some bearing on how we live, and on how we think about the world".

My only serious complaint about this wise and lively book is that its discussion both of particular authors and of more general critical problems is conducted within an unnecessary frame of fundamentalist assertion and methodological fuss. McGilchrist's best commentaries are so good of their kind that one wonders why he should have felt the need to support them with quite so much assertion of first principles. The book sometimes has an air of stylish, articulate jumpiness, provocative in a distracting or enfeebling sense in its more self-conscious moments. We have reached a stage where the critic's recall to a proper humility does indeed seem a timely and much needed thing. But reminders, salutary in themselves, that criticism cannot achieve what it forever aims at have a way of readily degenerating into a nervous tic. They have always been a strategy in the critic's repertory, as much as it is in the orator's; it should not be confused with loss of nerve. Some of McGilchrist's disclaimers risk underselling a rather good product, and their logical conclusion would be a silence more absolute than he ever thought of imposing on himself.

The poetic faculty

J. M. Cocking

HENRI MONDOR and LLOYD JAMES AUSTIN (Editors)

Stéphane Mallarmé: Correspondance, VI, Janvier 1893-Juillet 1894, 317pp.

VII, Juillet 1894-Décembre 1895, 366pp.

Paris: Gallimard

In 1893 Mallarmé escaped at last from what he once called "un labeur linguistique par lequel quotidiennement on se démolit de l'intérieur par la noble faculté poétique". At the age of fifty-one he had spent thirty years as a teacher of English, so he decided to retire early "et vraiment débiter dans la littérature". Raymond Poincaré, then Minister of Education and Art, granted him a supplementary pension of 1200 francs from a special fund for intellectuals, and increased it to 1800 francs in 1895.

His life went on, however, much as before, though with longer stays at his country retreat at Valvins and a greater sense of leisure. Revered as the type of the supremely dedicated artist, much loved and sought after as a friend, he had to write a great many letters acknowledging new works or personal dedications, answering requests for help, keeping in touch with his friends, inviting or answering invitations. Many of his letters have been lost and are known only through the references in letters he received and preserved, which are set out by Lloyd Austin in the footnotes and add a great deal to the interest of the volume.

The style of Mallarmé's letters can change radically according to their function. To Dr Evans, congratulating him on founding a hostel for American women students, Mallarmé composes an elegantly formal letter as conventional in its syntax as in its sentiments. He is matter-of-fact to Whistler, playfully amused and teasing to Mery Laurent. To Berthe Morisot, too, he writes straightforwardly, though with pleasantly precious and fanciful touches. But letters of thanks for books received show how the topic of literature can automatically switch his verbal imagination into his literary mode and rarely the stylistic atmosphere. He always manages to translate his appreciation into his own aesthetic conventions. Even Zola, whose imagination might seem to be of a different order, is brought into the Symbolist fold; and Mallarmé's praise of Rachilde, a purveyor of hard porn and bestiality so methodically neurotic as to be funny, seems more ingenious than genuine. "Toute une bouffée originelle si mal dite, sensuelle, et si résumée à des instantanés, le souhait humain". Some of them are typical; in others he seems to caricature his own syntactic mannerisms.

Mallarmé was usually obdurate about reducing the obscurity of his prose. His contributions to the *National Observer*, which had bothered so many of its readers, came to an end in July 1893. Louis Ganderax asked for the text of his lecture on "La Musique et les lettres" for the *Revue de Paris*, but returned it as too difficult for his readers. It was printed in the *Revue Blanche* and also in book form. The reviewer in the *Journal des Débats* said that a translation should have been provided. Curiously enough it was a note in French in the *New York Herald* that showed some understanding and appreciation of Mallarmé's style: "sa construction même est évangélique d'idées en nous latentes". His correspondents, of course, were full of admiration, though a few of the younger poets were turning away from him, and looking to new literary principles.

On one occasion Mallarmé did consent to make things easier for the general reader: this was when he sought publicity for his project of a fund for artists. The idea was inspired by his impression of the privileged lives of the Oxford Fellows

when he went there to lecture in February 1894. What he proposed, when he went back to Paris, was that publishers should be taxed on all editions of books out of copyright, including reprints of the classics. The money was to be invested in a fund to make life easier for writers and artists. Mallarmé sent a letter to *Le Figaro*; the editor asked him to make it easier to read, and for once Mallarmé obliged. A good deal of public interest was awakened, but publishers protested vociferously and the project came to nothing.

There is a good deal of anecdotal interest in the correspondence about the lecture on "La Musique et les lettres" which Mallarmé delivered at the invitation of the Taylorian Society in Oxford and then, through Whitley's good offices, in Pembroke College, Cambridge. At the Oxford lecture, Mallarmé realized, there was total incomprehension, with no notions beyond the polite from as audience consisting mainly of ladies who wanted to hear some French spoken. In Cambridge, he wrote home, the audience would have to pay and might show more interest. Only about twenty people turned up, but Mallarmé was convinced that he understood him perfectly. "Et écoutez religieusement, sent la sympathie et chaque mot par moi dit est une intelligence. Il faut dire que la mise en scène était exquise..."

"La Musique et les lettres" is one of his most important prose pieces. Further statements of his aesthetic convictions were written in 1895. Eleven articles appeared in the *Revue Blanche*; ten under the heading "Variations sur un sujet" and another called "Le Mystère des lettres". Preparations went on in a rather desultory way for the Dujardin edition of the *Poésies complètes*, still to be called, Mallarmé insisted, "Le Cahier", leaving the way open for more to come: "le livre poche par le petit nombre de vers". There were just a few poems to be added to what had appeared in the Dujardin facsimile edition of 1887.

Mallarmé often delighted his friends with light-hearted and witty "vers de circonstance", but made no headway with the Great Book. At the beginning of his retirement he told Berthe Morisot: "Je travaille sans trop savoir à quoi...". A few weeks later he seemed more sure of himself in writing to Henri de Régnier: "Je travaille très ferme et j'ai croisé retrouver un passé déjà qui me semblait évanoui". But a year later he is less affirmative about his work: "Je travaille, pas fort...". "J'ai travaillé sous la forme paresseuse...". "Je me laisse vivre, moi, pour la première fois depuis des années de paresse, influencé par le redoublement d'automatisme". Not that he had many years left, for work or pleasure.

Some of the most interesting of these letters were quoted in part by Henri Mondor in his *Vi de Mallarmé*, but with very vague dating. Professor Austin's introduction and notes provide, as always, all the background information needed to follow the references in the letters and to reconstruct the course of Mallarmé's life and relations in great detail. It is good that, after the long delay in the appearance of Volume V, the succession is re-established and moving at an impressive speed.

English researchers are prominent in the footnotes, notably the late Carl Barbier and Austin Gill. F. W. Leasky is named as contributing, from an anonymous private collection, the full text of a gem for correspondents, in which Mallarmé, asked to contribute to a symposium of opinions on the aesthetics, hygiene and propriety of bicycling fashions for ladies, and to express a preference for skirt or trousers, produced one of his most engaging conceits:

Je ne suis, devant votre question, comme devant les chevaux de l'acier, qu'un passant qui se gare; mais si leur mobile est celui absolu de montrer des jambes, je préfère que ce soit d'une jupe relevée, vestige féminin, pas du tout connerie-pantalon, que l'éblouissement fonde, me renverse et me darde.

Preformationists and epigenesists

SHIRLEY A. ROE

Matter, Life, and Generation: Eighteenth-century embryology and the Haller-Wolff debate

216pp. Cambridge University Press. \$16.

0 521 23540 5

WILLIAM HARVEY

Disputations touching the Generation of Animals

Translated with introduction and notes by Gwenth Whitteridge

302pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £25. 0 632 00492 4

There can be few more fascinating stories in the history of biology than that of the struggles to grasp and understand the problem of the cyclic mechanism of reproduction and development of organisms from one generation to the next. It is the more poignant since it is only within the past twenty to thirty years that it can be said to have been "solved", and then only partially.

We now know that, at the molecular level of analysis, organisms reproduce themselves by a self-copying multiplication of a set of "instructions" (from both parents) incorporated in a series of large molecules (the double-stranded DNA helix) by a reciprocal, complementary replication process. Strand A of the double helix gives rise to strand A' (the sister strand) which itself then promotes the formation of another strand A and so on, like alternating mirror images. The "instructions" take the form of sequences of four different types of chemical building-blocks ("nucleotides") arranged in a specific order along the immensely long DNA "tape". That order determines the types of protein to be formed and thus the basic characters of the whole organism. We know that all the cells of the organism - right from the fertilized egg to those of the mature adult - contain (with few exceptions) the complete set of "instructions" for building the organism. Whether the developing cell becomes part of the brain, liver, skin or what have you, and when, is controlled by the switching on or off of the relevant piece of DNA. There are still gaps in our knowledge of the control mechanisms involved, but those basic principles are accepted without controversy in the scientific world generally.

Previously, there had been no lack of controversy over almost every aspect of inheritance and embryogenesis. Debates concerned the relative parts played by male and female in creation of the offspring; the nature and role of the male semen, the mechanism of growth and differentiation of the foetus, etc., but in particular, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they were focused on the great battles between those who believed in "pre-formation" and the protagonists of "epigenesis".

"Pre-formationists" held that minute copies of the adult form were in existence right from the beginning, each perfect replica containing a smaller copy within it, like a nest of Chinese boxes, all present from the time of their "original" creation by God. Reproduction, then, was really simply a question of growth by enlargement and essentially the problem did not exist. "Epigenesists" believed that the embryo was formed by forces shaping and directing its development from what was originally undifferentiated matter, but they differed among themselves on the nature of the controlling factors.

In one sense, the position of the pre-formationists was unassailable since they did not have to face the great problem of reproduction: it had all been done previously by God. They were a little worried by the fact that the embryo was formed from birth to normal offspring and they had to produce *ad hoc* explanations for the multiple progeny that could arise from a single coelenterate polyp (and indeed from plants) without the need for a normal cycle of development. They had to skirt round the difficulty of a final end to all life

when the copies eventually ran out, but, for some, it all fitted beautifully with the idea of a final Day of Judgement and the direct control of all creation by the Deity.

But pre-formationism died a natural death during the first half of the last century, mainly when it became apparent that duration of life on earth had to be measured in hundreds of thousands, if not millions, rather than in years.



Georges Buffon, seated on the far right, in conversation with John Neuhart, while two of their colleagues did their search for animalcules in the female semen. This engraving from Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle* (1749) is reproduced in the book by Shirley Roe reviewed here.

of years or more, and it was too much to suppose those mini-copies could have stretched back so many generations, quite apart from the unwelcome prospect of their running out in the future. Yet it is interesting to note that our modern explanation of inheritance and embryogenesis carries with it elements of both pre-formation (albeit limited) and epigenesis in the pre-existing DNA that is passed on directly ready-made, to offspring from parents and the basic chemical mechanism by which this same DNA passes on the message for the construction of the organism's specific characters from non-specific building-blocks. The principal missing element before 1953 (when Watson and Crick elucidated the structure of the DNA double helix) was an understanding of the copying mechanism, to which our scientific ancestors paid so little attention, although one had to be offered, as a purely logical necessity, in order to complete the picture.

In *Matter, Life and Generation* Shirley A. Roe deals with one, perhaps the most striking - example of the debate between pre-formationists and epigenesists in her detailed analysis of the arguments between Albrecht v. Haller and Caspar Friedrich Wolff in the mid-eighteenth century, supported by a translation of the nine letters from Wolff to Haller (rather diminished in interest by the absence of the lost complementary correspondence from Haller to Wolff).

Haller was a prolific writer, a polymath by disposition and deeply religious ("Enough, there is a God: Nature shouts it out"). For him science had to occur within the limits of his religion: its function was to demonstrate how the Creator did his work. Haller's outlook was essentially empirical and Newtonian; he was a supporter of Bacon, violently opposed to Descartes, and suspicious of any explanation involving chance that might be used as a challenge to the omnipotence of God. Writing to his pre-formationist friend, Charles Bonnet, he warned against the danger of admitting the formation of a finger to chance "because if so, then why not a man?"

Wolff was a product of the rationalist revolution of the eighteenth century, but by no means a crude mechanist/reductionist and only hesitantly anti-vitalist since he was aware that the *vis essentialis* which he postulated as the specific force directing the development of the embryo, was ill-defined and had to be more than a general "building force". For Haller, the embryonic heart was there before fertilization and so were other structures which Wolff pointed out were part of the structure of the egg and not of the embryo. Wolff could "see no heart", nor even the U-shaped tube that preceded it in

Martin Pollock

the early stages, but was rightly criticized by Haller with the argument that not seeing something doesn't mean it isn't there.

Professor Roe's main point, however, is that the controversy between the two stemmed from their contrasted philosophies rather than from scientific arguments. But it is questionable whether this is any more true for them than for many

in birds (especially the passionate frolics of ostriches) are both informative and delightfully entertaining. Harvey explains that he uses Aristotle and his teacher Fabricius, both of whom he quotes at length, as a basis for argument, for and against. He made several significant discoveries, of which the most important was recognition of the egg as the starting-point for the generation of the offspring of all types of organisms ("omne vivum ex ovo") whether or not they were hatched outside the womb or born viviparously.

Like Aristotle, Harvey was a firm epigenesist, but differed in his judgment of the female role in procreation which Aristotle considered was only to provide material basis (i.e. food) upon which the male operated generatively. But it was on that very point that Harvey ran into his biggest difficulty. Indeed, it was the mechanism by which copulation provoked fertilization and development of the previously quiescent egg, and the possible role of the male semen in the process (accepting a bi-parental inheritance that could hardly be denied, despite Aristotle), that seemed to puzzle him most. One often feels that he is repeatedly circling round the problem, not always consistently, never reaching a firm conclusion, and arguing with himself in the hope that something clearer will emerge; he finally confesses "openly" that he "was at a standstill" or even attributes the whole business to the "will of Almighty God", an admission which he would surely have thought equivalent to failure.

Harvey's predicament stemmed from his inability to demonstrate the presence of male semen in the uterus after copulation - either in the hen or the female deer that he examined so carefully. Ironically, his own scepticism

tical attitude towards "idle dreams built upon conjecture and slender reasoning and unsupported by any testimony of the eyes" must have been at least partly responsible for his attributing too much importance to his *not* seeing the spermatozoa, which of course were there but too small to see. (This was only twenty years or so before Leeuwenhoek demonstrated the presence of wriggling animalcules in male semen with his new microscope.) But it is still surprising that Harvey did not apparently even consider the possibility of having missed something too small to recognize with his crude hand lens, particularly when he had stressed the possible significance of the analogy between fertilization of the egg and contagious infection in certain diseases (rabies, leprosy, plague etc) which "scatter their seeds through the air and so propagate in the bodies of others diseases like themselves... by a process which he repeatedly refers to as hidden and mysterious.

In my case, his failure was disastrous because he concluded that no material substance could be responsible for fertilization and he began to draw comparisons with the "action at a distance" of a magnet, the effects of contagious diseases (as previously mentioned) and even the generation of purely mental conceptions in the brain, arguing that just as a spider "knows" how to spin a web, so an immaterial idea can bring the woman to conceive a child.

It is in fact often difficult to be sure what Harvey's opinion really was and it is in this connection that the translator or editor carries great responsibility. To take just one example: on p 141 we read "... from the male proceeds only the procreative or formative power [my italics]

June Books

Fiction

TO DIE AT SUNSET

Elsa Joubert

From the award-winning author of *People*, a relentlessly horrifying story of a young bride who finds herself in an alien land living on a remote coffee plantation in northern Angola.

£5.95

Non-Fiction

LIGHTNING BIRD

Lyall Watson

The story of one man's journey into Africa's unknown past.

From the best-selling author of *Supernature*, a deeply absorbing account of Adrian Boshier, a young Englishman who at sixteen arrived in Africa, ventured into the bush alone and succeeded in solving some of the ancient mysteries of that distant land.

£7.95

THE DRAGON AND THE BEAR

Philip Short

A major study of China after Mao and the Soviet Union as it evolved after Stalin's death and as it is today under Brezhnev, with a sharp insight into the concerns of daily life of the Chinese and Russians.

£10.95

THE GRAND SCUTTLE

Dan van der Vat

The sinking of the German Fleet at Scapa Flow in 1919.

The final full account of a unique piece of naval history - the amazing suicide of an entire German Fleet on the orders of its own admiral.

£9.95

HOLIDAY FARM

Evelyn Cox

The humorous account of running a small farm guest house, with its trials and horrors, but the pleasure too of catering for visitors, some of whom hardly know the difference between one end of a horse and the other.

£6.95

THE CHILDREN'S STORY

James Clevell

By the author of *Noble House* and *Shogun*, a frightening fable of the future that underlines the vulnerability of children to political brainwashing. "Feed the Minds? or Twist the Minds? What a warning James Clevell has given us in this book."

£4.95

Hodder & Stoughton

School prospectus

Christopher Norris

ANN JEFFERSON and DAVID ROBNEY (Editors)

Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction

186pp. Batsford. £4.95. 0 7134 3454 6

"Under which king, Bezonian?" was F. R. Leavis's ironic title for an essay in *Scrutiny* rejecting the Marxist call for a forthright declaration of that journal's political stance. A few years earlier Leavis had returned a somewhat similar reply to René Wellek, in this case refusing the request that he, Leavis, should make some attempt to set out the "philosophy" which underpinned his practical-critical judgments. The debate has moved on with the recent change in theoretical climate, due mainly to the influence of structuralist and post-structuralist thinking. Leavis's erstwhile opponents are themselves now faced, with varieties of "Marxist" and "philosophical" criticism utterly remote from the fighting ground of their own earlier choosing.

It may still be possible to write with a fine professorial disdain which treats these theorists as so many bothered enemies of imagination whose ideas are not worth serious pursuit. But this reaction, though widespread, can hardly stand up against the growing awareness in many university departments of English - that literary studies are in the process of radical transformation. It is a full two decades since Barthes and the *Nouvelle Critique* issued their challenge to the supposed neutrality and ideological innocence of traditionalist scholarship. The cultural time-lag has meant that students in this country are suddenly faced with a bewildering range of theoretical opinions, mostly deriving from that early structuralist challenge but presenting, by now, a complex history of internal schism and debate. The most visible rifts on this perilous terrain are those marked out between Althusserian Marxism, Lacanian psychoanalysis and that variety of deconstruction - or negative hermeneutics - associated with Derrida and his American disciples.

Ain Jefferson and David Robney offer their collection of essays as a guide for the perplexed, a broad-based survey of the movements and ideas most active in recent debate. Between them they cover the major part of the book's theoretical ground, Jefferson contributing chapters on "Russian Formalism" and "Structuralism and Post-Structuralism", while Robney writes on the American New Critics and modern linguistic approaches to literary style.

There are also essays by Elizabeth Wright on psychoanalytic criticism, and by David Forgacs on Marxist literary theory. The general approach is briskly informative with a strong sense of historical development and a useful stress on affinities and differences, as between the Russian and American concepts of Formalist method. Given such a wide diversity of fields it is unreasonable to expect any unified perspective or ground-plan argument. The editors have done a good job in providing sufficient cross-references from chapter to chapter for the student to grasp an emergent pattern in the issues they raise. The focus is occasionally sharpened by like the exchange between Lacan and Derrida over Poe's "The Purloined Letter" - and pointing up their theoretical implications.

If the essays have anything like a common teleology, it is the movement from positive concepts ("structure", "unconscious", "realism") to a level of reflexive questioning and vigilant self-criticism. Dr Jefferson provides a good example in tracing the internal shifts and mutations which led from a self-proclaimed structuralist "science of the text" to the post-structuralist denial of any such frame or system. She makes the shrewd choice of Barthes's *S/Z* as a text where the lingering dream of structuralist method is dispersed by glimpses of a

utopian "free-play" pointing the way toward Derridan deconstruction. The other essays mostly follow a similar pattern. Thus Forgacs, on the Marxist debate, proceeds from the "reflection model" (Lukács), via theories of textual production and genesis (Pierre Macherey and Lucien Goldmann), to the "language-centred" materialist semiotics of Bakhtin and the Russian post-formalists. Wright pursues the same broadly diagnostic outline, from notably Marie Bonaparte on Poe - to Lacan and his structuralist recasting of Freudian topology and language.

This approach is saved from mere cliché up-to-dateness by the serious attention that is devoted to Lukács, Goldmann and others who often receive short shrift in post-structuralist accounts. In fact it is a point in favour of this volume that it offers more than a perfunctory account of movements - which scarcely rate a mention in other recent compendia of this kind. Particularly suggestive are the links which Robney perceives between the semiotic enterprise of C. S. Peirce and Charles Morris and the formalist projection of later's use of the term "iconic".

On balance, this book presents a lively and authoritative reading of issues which should find a place in any self-respecting modern syllabus of literary studies.

Hollywood is sometimes right

Who is that up there? Mugging on that cross? That relatively noble and seemingly victimised figure?

That is King, who was called King. Who wanted to be of help. Who suffered for us, who died that we might live.

And left us some of his lesser features. Sharp teeth, and a strong voice, and a rather short temper.

Horvornousness was not transmissible. Or else the iron inhibited.

D. J. Enright

commentary

The haunted conscience of comedy

Peter Conrad

L'Amour des Trois Oranges
Glyndebourne

For Glyndebourne's new production of *L'Amour des Trois Oranges* (wittily sponsored by Cointreau), the designer Maurice Sendak has built a toy theatre where illusions can be tested and occult games enacted. Sendak's speciality as an illustrator is a world of infantile hauntings, where bogeys and ogres are exorcised by laughter. This comedy is a recourse of nervous alarm: laughter is the sound of scepticism cheering itself up, bravely resisting the appeal made by Peter Pan and refusing to believe in demons. So it is in Prokofiev's opera, the action of which is prescribed as an antidote to the Prince's despair; yet when he does emit a self-alluviating staccato chuckle at the sight of Fata Morgana's underwear he finds himself to be not released from his trauma, but sent back to suffer through another by way of expiation. Is laughter therapeutic, as the court physicians propose – the relief, like sneezing or sex, of an irritation – or is it only a palliant self-deception? Do we laugh because we're happy or because we're frightened?

Sendak the sinister comedian answers Prokofiev's questions by designing phantoms which are ludicrous precisely because they're terrifying, and which we anxiously placate by choosing to find them funny. An inflatable Fata Morgana tumescens as the character's mid is invoked, growing with gruesome vegetative speed until her yellow body, plumped out with hot air, threatens to burst through the painted sky. She's no cartoon but a dirgeful monster, an exhalation from everyone's fantasy: What gascously sustains her is our credulous fear of her. There's a similar superstitious grotesquerie to the giant cook in Crémone's palace, with his stupefied circling eyes and pendulous, slavering tongue. Appearing soon after the dinner interval, he's a cannibalistic remnant to Glyndebourne's well-fed customers, who patronize him with their laughter until they realize – from the severed human limbs being shovelled into his incandescent stew – that it might be his intention to ingest them.

The blow-up witch and the mechanistic ghost whose stomach is a furnace are triumphs of Sendak's spooky puppetry. His first costume for the sullen Prince (Ryland Davies) is equally creepy. The character wears a body-socking inscribed with an anatomical diagram, over which the physicians pore. The costume sees through him, X-raying his diseased organism (which may after all have incubated these imaginary bog-tors). Like Freudian jokes, the Prince's skeletal suit is a glimpse into a sick interior.

Sendak's wizardry is magnificently abetted by the conducting of Bohdan Hattink, who makes the pit an underworld of menace and mental rebuffancy. The conductor's empty-toned might be to play *L'Amour des Trois Oranges*, with its heretofore furor, its manically hiccupping laughter and its broken music, as an exercise in rhythmic virtuosity. Hattink avoids this obvious course, and treats the music as the haunted conscience of the on-stage comedy. The orchestra tells truths which the drama seeks to laugh off. The hellish inflation of Fata Morgana is matched by a crescendo which accumulates in and erupts from the pit though the Prince's melody may look absurdly causeless, the orchestra at the beginning of Act II gives a damning and unsympathetic diagnosis of it in an episode of mawkish dissonance which pulses between enervation and feverish urgency. Hattink is at his most demonic in the card game between the magus "Tobello" (Richard Vano) and the wretched Prince. Fata Morgana of Nelly Moray, as they vanish to couple behind the screen, yelping Dickensianly or growling in

volcanic fury, the orchestra is lashed through a mad scherzo. It's the music of the disoriented id – a psychological nocturne, its grotesquerie as maimed and unsettling as Elektra's dance or the deadly comedy in Moller. As well as darkening what the director Frank Corsaro calls a shaggy-dog story into a grimly present nightmare, Hattink locates in the hectic score intervals of lyrical deceleration and grieving pathos such as the lament of the King (Willard White) for his son or the expiring high soprano plaints of the thirty princesses when they emerge from their orange carapaces.

Corsaro's production capitalizes ingenuously on the opera's interrogation of its own illusions. The presence of a *commedia dell'arte* troupe signifies, here as in *Ariadne auf Naxos* or *Turandot*, the ironic invasion of opera by self-disbelief. The work comes equipped with its own guerilla band of nay-sayers. More radically still, Prokofiev's prologue, in which a ruble of competing factions in the on-stage audience voraciously demand a comedy or a tragedy, jokes or tunes, and resolve their differences by breaking into fist fights, shows the operatic Gesamtkunstwerk to be a chaos of disputatious, divided aims. When the King prescribes theatrical gales to divert his son, he acknowledges what Brecht saw as the culinary triviality of opera.

This encouraged, Corsaro turns the prologue into a satiric review of Glyndebourne's repertory. To appease the crowd, a series of placards offering each of the operas being performed this season is raised aloft; every one of them is jeeringly

dismissed. And when *L'Amour des Trois Oranges* is finally settled on, the tenor, miffed, stages a small tantrum and refuses to assume the role of Prince. Like Sendak and Hattink, Corsaro moves in and out of the illusion, deriding its fragility and falsity, yet at the end discovering in it a prophetic dread and institutionalizing its daydreaming violence in a political reign of terror. He has set the work in a Tiepollesque street-theatre during the French Revolution, and just as the revolution consumes its offspring so the operatic illusion, however flimsy it may seem, persecutes and executes the participants in its charade.

When the opera ends, the Prince and the Princess, rather than being acclaimed, are pelted by the spectators. Fata Morgana returns, carrying a miniature guillotine to whose honed mercy she commits the fatuous royal actors. She's attended by a pair of body-builders, who have flexed, pumped and postured their way through the opera, man-handling heavy items of scenic furniture; now, as well as her paramours, they become emblems of the physical power she has attained, muscular totalitarian monoliths. The Prince's illness was a real one after all. *L'Amour des Trois Oranges* is presented as the prophetic bad dream of an expiring class – or rather three such classes under sentence of death: the aristocrats of 1789, those of the Russia Prokofiev left after the Bolshevik coup, and those who happily applaud this premonition of their own demise in the Glyndebourne stalls, and have an orange hurled at them by Corsaro during the curtain-calls. That uneasy, mocking march is played on the way to the scaffold.

Delicate deceptions

Harold Hobson

The Understanding
Strand Theatre

Angela Huth's *The Understanding* marks something of a departure in the career of Sir Ralph Richardson; and it is rare indeed that an actor should take a step so startling when he has been in the very top flight of his profession for forty years, and more. He has never in living experience been surpassed or even equaled in the portrayal of ordinary men who, through trial and despair, have won their way to a kind of almost supernatural glory, whether when in the conquest of fear he walked into the unknown in J. B. Priestley's *Johnson over Jordan*, or in R. C. Sheriff's *The White Carnation*, in the moment preceding their death together in an air-raid, he discovered and demonstrated by the slight pressure of a hand the wonder of his love being loved. Anything less or more is a stranger to him; and it takes one quite a while to realize that the genial, friendly Leonard whom he plays in *The Understanding* has, in their sumptuous London mansion, been deceiving his wife for the whole of their married life. For there are three sisters, all living under the same majestic roof, and Leonard, like Dickens, but with a greater ease of bearing, a larger gesture, and a more selfless of all, an untroubled happiness and an unflinching courtesy, has married the wrong one.

There are things in *The Understanding* which are more familiar. Richardson makes a splendid entrance, through a centre door, in morning clothes, striped trousers, and top hat. He carries this off with great bravura, but it was done before by Ronald Squire, in Somerset Maugham's *The Breadwinner*, and the young girl Kate (Sylvester Le Touze) who bursts into the household and transforms its old-fashioned dignity into a garden of swifling moorlands is not too distantly related to Hilda Wangel, except that she is welcomed by the dying wife, Eva (Georgina Anderson) who perishes

has not been deceived, after all. For her last words to the girl are "Have fun". They are the same as those of Hortense Schneider, the original of Zola's Nana, who had indeed, throughout the eighty years of her exuberant frivolity had the fun that Eva, without Leonard's even noticing it, had not.

Romanticism in parts though it may be, the play has at the opening of the second act, a scene of such absolute magic that one's breath is taken away by its beauty, delicacy, unexpectedness and pathos. Kate offers to dance for Leonard, and one fears that what is to follow will be banal and embarrassing. On the contrary it is something of light and glorious sadness. As she weaves her way, with long-extended arms, amongst her about-mobles, "Kate, with a mixture of coyness and gentle play, recalls Eva's last words, marking them with the light tap of her dancing feet, as haunting as the beating of a distant drum. And the exquisite, cruel thing is that Leonard is quite unmoved. Richardson has not shown us such cruelty since his Dr Sloper in *The Heiress*; and Dr Sloper's cruelty was not ignoble; it was the other side of his passionate affection for his wife, who too had died, but not, like Eva, unwanted.

In the end Leonard is free to run away with Acton, the sister he has always loved, who should have been played by Celia Johnson; her part is now taken with great sympathy and wayward affection by Joan Greenwood. Miss Huth, points no moral, but, as the lower girl, Leonard's dashing sports car, full of exultant liberty, Kate scatters a handful of fallen leaves. One remembers that, however long and splendid the banquet, the bill will be presented; and must be paid at last. This is a moving and a troubling play, of great achievement and more promise. My colleagues have underrated it as cruelly as the first production of *The Bridge Party*. Details of the likely Literature Festival (July 12-17) may be had from June Oldham, Programme Director, The Festival Office, Alkley, West Yorkshire LS29 8DG; tel 021210



A drawing of his wife by John Henry Fuseli, to be sold at Christie's on June 15.

A hangdog heir

Robin Buss

An Unsuitable Job for a Woman
Globe Cinema, Notting Hill

Christopher Petit's film sticks reasonably close to the plot while pervertingly undermining the spirit of the P. D. James novel from which it is taken. Her heroine, Cordelia Gray, was a young woman who found herself, almost by accident, cast in a role we usually associate, even in detective fiction by women writers, with Belgian engineers, aristocratic dilettantes or tough-talking San Franciscans. The reader was asked to enjoy her triumph over the murderer precisely because it was at the same time a triumph over the expectations of most of the other characters, demonstrating that women are not necessarily unsuited to this, or for that matter any other job. Not only that, but the message obscured in Petit's film, it vanishes to the point where one might think he accepts the preconception implicit in the title.

His Cordelia, played by Pippa Guard, certainly looks competent enough and reacts without hysteria to the suicide of her partner, Bernie Pryde, the private eye whose detective agency she inherits. From this point, the film is a study in the apparent suicide of Mark Callender and, where her counterpart in the book develops a profound but professionally justifiable interest in the dead boy, falls idiotically in love with him. This motif Petit reinforces by introducing a scene where, for no good reason, she tries to reconstruct the suicide, finishes hanging from a beam and is only narrowly saved from following Mark and Bernie to a totally unsuitable end for a heroine.

When being attacked by villains, P. D. James's Cordelia manages to keep her feet firmly on the ground. So Petit, having discarded the heroine in all but name, forgets the very English setting of the novel and plunges us into the sinister atmosphere of a Chabrol thriller. Cars glide silently through the landscape, accompanied by doom-laden music, conversations are overlaid with whirring of unseen helicopters and most of the action takes place in semi-obscurity. Mark's father (Paul Freeman) is the head of an industrial empire, but it is Billie Whitelaw as

his secretary who does most, by her brooding presence, to suggest the corruption of the family and the skeleton in its cupboard. With her around, casting heavy-lidded glances of suspicion at everyone, Cordelia seems redundant and the progress of her investigation, incidental to the discovery of the crime. Indeed, when she almost succeeds in replicating the victim's death, she appears to be trying to confirm the coroner's verdict and it is left to the secretary to find the clue which throws doubt on Mark's suicide.

Nonetheless, the film is often successful in its own terms, which are those of the French cinema rather than the English detective novel, and there are some moments of real suspense. There is a neat hint at the beginning of the importance of the victim's blood group; but, apart from this, Petit is not interested in the mechanics of the investigation, and even character is made secondary to the atmosphere which he conjures up in his landscape, and landscape to the ending which, for anyone who has not read the novel, is probably indecipherable, and not only because it is played in all-but-total darkness.

The Constitution Society

EDWARD SHILL
Edward Shill's attempt to bring both to the spiritual and the material the reality of the larger society is a work of his own creation, and the papers in this volume are published separately since the Second World War – have a great deal to do with the development of his thought and his work.

To Dwell Among Friends

Personal Networks in Town and Country
CLAUDIA S. FISCHER
Is there a difference in the way that those who live in small towns and villages in California, Fischer examines various aspects of the life of the small town and the city, and the way that the two are related to the larger society.

CHICAGO
The University of Chicago Press
500 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, IL 60610

CHICAGO
The University of Chicago Press
500 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, IL 60610

commentary

John Cage at seventy

Wilfrid Mellers

Incredulity is our inevitable reaction to the news that John Cage is seventy; and the incredulity bears on what he "stands for", since for the past half century his activities, or sometimes non-activities, have been a protest against our "Western" obsession with the ego and the dimension of Time within which it must be manifested. Throughout the ages occidental artists have made artefacts that attempt to freeze moments in historical time, and through them to mould those who live among and follow after them. Cage has become "less and less interested in music, because a composer is simply someone who tells other people what to do, I find this an unattractive way of getting things done. I'd like our activities to be more social and anarchically so."

Even back in the 1930s and 1940s, when Cage could still be accounted a composer, he dispensed with the European dimension of harmony, which marked alternating degrees of tension and relaxation existing in time; and produced music that was purely monodic-melodic or percussive. Even in his keyboard pieces for prepared piano he displayed (as Schoenberg, who briefly taught him, dismissively pointed out) no awareness of Western harmonic "consciousness", substituting for it the preordained, variously serial linear and rhythmic patterns of oriental cultures. Listening to his "Sonatas and Interludes" for prepared piano may induce trance; but the trance leaves us saner, calmer, more at one with ourselves, the world, and whatever we call the absolute. Cage seems, however, to have felt that there was an element of cheat in his applying eastern techniques of order to his American environment, or at least to have believed that there were more radical implications in his denial of post-Renaissance Will. Oriental and primitive arts often involve chance processes that may be relevant to us, regardless of time and place. The tossing of coins and dice, the shuffling of sticks, the noting of imperfections of paper, may free us from the tug of memory and the pull of desire; and since memory is the past and desire the future we are thereby released from chronometric time. The acasual synchronism of I Ching was for Cage a divinatory technique; a piece such as his "Music for Carillon", in which the serrations of the carillon sounds on the carillon roll were devised on the principle of paper cut-outs, is unadulterated magic.

Since numbers are pre-existent to consciousness, it's not fortuitous that chance led Cage on to an unambiguously certain post-World War II music. Indeed, more at home in the age of post-World War II, Cage was too long in the tooth (and politically too red in claw) to play the juvenile leads in any Bronx or Tenthred production of *The Fire Raisers*. Media heads vacate their minds with joints pregnant with "Afghan" and magic mushrooms plucked by their own hand from exotic, foreign parts. Even Royalty is represented by the trusted old guard – the Queen Mother. (Princess Di only gets a moment's look in from a poster. The inclusion of all but the most *virté* of avant-garde cinema – and a man in drag as representative of the Palace is not a shockingly novel treatment of an institution noted for its minutiae and outlandish costumes.)

The nefarious, transplanting inclinations of the mad surgeon reflect recent history only in so far as they are influenced by the film *Coma*. Otherwise, this creator of a composite human monster (motel of pigment and topped with Malcolm McDowell's purloined head) and an artificial brain prone to cosmic platitudes, could easily swap his own part with that of any number of evil cinematic buffoons. The length of the union-

guos trust in the instinctual life. When we have learned to have faith in what we hear, see, feel and smell, "works" of art will have become unnecessary. Instead we'll have "a purposelessness or a purposeless play"; which is, however, "an affirmation of life – not an attempt to bring order out of chaos or to suggest improvements in creation, but simply a way of waking up to the very life we're living, which is so excellent once one gets one's mind and desires out of its way". The ultimate philosophical statement of this position is in Cage's notorious silent piece, "Four minutes, thirty three seconds", wherein a pianist sits immobile at a piano for the prescribed period, while we as audience listen as we've never listened before to the sounds we call silence. "They change... but if I were to feel that one of them didn't please me or wasn't suitable for me, then you could immediately see why such a notion of preference is illegitimate, since in fact the sound did occur."

In all his recent activities (I evade the word "works") Cage invites us to make our own music in aurally experiencing the world around us, the process being simultaneously an opting out of selfhood and an opting in to the environment we're part of. The two new pieces presented at the first concert of the Almeida Festival neatly epitomize this unified duality. "Inlets" opts out in the sense that four "players" dribble water within various-sized conch shells, passively accepting the slowly shifting patterns of the acoustically amplified sounds created. They and we enter a state of trance, as we do when listening to Cage's prepared piano pieces of thirty years back. The difference is that then Cage invited and ordered the quite complex sounds, whereas now we do, as we listen to the ways in which chance or god or nature dribbles.

Losing our heads

Andrew Hislop

Britannia Hospital
ABC Cinema, Shaftesbury Avenue

Lindsay Anderson's *Britannia Hospital* is both poignantly topical and curiously dated. The use of the National Health Service as a screen or stage metaphor for the state of the nation is hardly new, and the society satirised in David Sherwin's screenplay would be quite at home in those social burlesques of the British cinema in the 1970s and late 1960s. Indeed, more at home in the age of post-World War II, Cage was too long in the tooth (and politically too red in claw) to play the juvenile leads in any Bronx or Tenthred production of *The Fire Raisers*. Media heads vacate their minds with joints pregnant with "Afghan" and magic mushrooms plucked by their own hand from exotic, foreign parts. Even Royalty is represented by the trusted old guard – the Queen Mother. (Princess Di only gets a moment's look in from a poster. The inclusion of all but the most *virté* of avant-garde cinema – and a man in drag as representative of the Palace is not a shockingly novel treatment of an institution noted for its minutiae and outlandish costumes.)

The nefarious, transplanting inclinations of the mad surgeon reflect recent history only in so far as they are influenced by the film *Coma*. Otherwise, this creator of a composite human monster (motel of pigment and topped with Malcolm McDowell's purloined head) and an artificial brain prone to cosmic platitudes, could easily swap his own part with that of any number of evil cinematic buffoons. The length of the union-

The other and much bigger piece is an opting in: for in *Roaratorio* Cage celebrates James Joyce's century by making his own Wake out of Finnegan's. Chance structures out of the piece in that throughout its hour and a half duration Cage reads passages from *Finnegans Wake* selected by the chance process he calls mesostics. Even if the words were audible, which they mostly aren't, they would thus be denied even the dream-like sequence and consequence they have in Joyce: Cage describes the piece as a Circus, thereby emphasizing the circularity rather than linearity of the concept. As he reads – and the intonations of his voice are themselves music – the audience circumnavigates the auditorium, picking up now one, now another, of the sound-strands emitted by multiple electrophonic speakers. The tapes "superimpose seventy-two layers of sound from places mentioned in the Wake". The babel of bars, the yells of babies, cats and dogs, amorous or murderous cries in the night, the gurglings of the river Liffey and what could be (who but Cage knows?) the bubbling of vats of Guinness assail our ears, making the environment within which we live, move and, "for the Time being", have our Being. Though we are not called upon to make choices between these sounds, there is a further aural dimension which complicates the situation. It is this complication that makes the total experience richly rewarding.

Dotted around the hall are a number of live musicians, representatives of Irish folk culture: a singer, a fiddler, a flute-player, a pipe, two drummers. These folk musicians intermittently create their "musics of necessity", which spring from the lives they've led in the contexts of tradition but which, going on, become at once historical and eternally present. What they make is not the artefacts of Western "works" of art but a continuum, existing within the

flux we're surrounded by. That they endure makes our awareness of chaos peculiarly poignant. I found that I kept listening to the superb Joe Heaney singing his age-old but ever-young songs, wishing that I were allowed to give him my undivided attention. Yet I recognize that in so doing I was, from my Western heritage, missing Cage's point: which is that I haven't the right to, not having known Joe's world or lived his life. If today we can achieve an act of praise it can only be from the midst of chaos; and Cage's eldritch but benign grin, when pseudo-silence finally succeeded the sounds he'd unleashed, proved that such jubilation is at least a possibility.

Most of us aren't prepared, or perhaps aren't courageous enough, to relinquish moral choice and the splendours and miseries that men through the ages have made incarnate in their artefacts. None the less "the Cage phenomenon" was necessary and has earned our gratitude: there aren't too many people around whose presence makes us feel spiritually, if not "morally", better. Two little glosses on *Roaratorio* may serve as characteristically paradoxical epilogue. Of the live Irish musicians two, having undermined modern technology by missing their plane, failed to turn up and had to be presented vicariously on mechanized tape. John Cage, on the other hand, timeless old wizard that he is, ended the ceremony at the scheduled hour, precisely to the minute! The warp and wool of chance and infinity, sterner and time, remain infinitely mysterious. In a sense one can regard (but not dismiss) Joe Heaney and Beethoven, the mewling cat and wailing babe, the carolling skylark and the scurrying truck as transitory accidents. As Samuel Beckett, another clown-saint who is Cage's contemporary and Joyce's disciple, put it: "I hear a murmur, something gone wrong with the silence."

Marsha Hunt looks beautiful as a nurse and tries her best to conjure an appropriate emotion when the chopper disturbs McDowell's piece of mind.

The weakness of the futuristic elements of the plot, which take place in the ultra modern research centre next to the crumbling Britannia Hospital, may be what we need: an appropriate emotion would be the emotional force of the film comes not from a fear of the future but from the only too recognizable frailties and absurdities of human behaviour.

With a National Health strike threatening, the contradictions of hospital workers withdrawing their labour is of immediate moment (even if the medical services are primarily a symbolic vehicle); *Britannia Hospital*, though, "bastes" not only unions but all elements of society and shows how a concern for the trifling conflicts of human manners easily gets confused with more weighty and violent struggles. It ends with the whole gamut, radicals and royals alike, suspending hostilities while they listen to the voice of the future from the artificial brain.

But, whatever its intention, the film does not make the earlier conflict seem irrelevant in the face of this future. Rather, it confirms the survival of old social problems in the age of the silicon chip. It is dated not because it includes veteran protesters – they exist and have much to protest about – but because it ignores in its social microcosm the culture of the new disaffected, the teenage underemployed. They do not even get to storm the gates of Britannia Hospital, let alone to sit with the Queen Mother listening to the being of the future saying: "What a piece of work is man! How like a God! How like a God!"

New Oxford books: Literature

Thomas Hardy

A Biography
Michael Millgate

This new full-scale biography presents a far richer and more comprehensive account of Thomas Hardy's life than has previously been available, and also a more complex, balanced, and sympathetic view of Hardy himself as man and as artist. Michael Millgate draws extensively on hitherto unknown materials and on his experience as co-editor of *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy* to produce a work whose authority is evident throughout. Illustrated. £15

The Development of Milton's Prose Style

Thomas N. Corns

This is a thorough, informed account of Milton's distinctiveness as a prose writer. It charts his development from the exuberance of his anti-prelatical tracts, possibly the most exhilarating and inventive prose of the seventeenth century, to the restrained and functional eloquence of his final pamphlets. It shows in the process that various features that have been regarded as particularly Miltonic are in fact widespread in pamphlet literature of the time. £12.50

Richard Baxter

Puritan Man of Letters
N.H. Keeble

Richard Baxter (1615-93) was an exceptional pastor at Kidderminster during the Interregnum, and an influential religious leader. He was also the most prolific and one of the most popular of seventeenth-century authors. Dr Keeble outlines Baxter's literary career, and analyses the techniques of the practical, devotional, historiographical, biographical, and auto-biographical works. £15

Medieval Writers and their Work

Middle English Literature and its Background, 1100-1500
John Burrow

Here is a clearly written short introduction to medieval literature that will help students to a greater understanding and enjoyment of the writers of the period, and that will be essential reading for anyone interested in the subject. £9.95 paperback £3.95 OPUS

Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning

Snorri Sturluson
Edited by Anthony Faulkes

The *Edda* of Snorri Sturluson (1179-241), Icelandic historian and poet, is a fine example of Old Icelandic narrative by a master of style and contains some of the best-told comic episodes of the Middle Ages. This edition in normalized spelling contains notes and a glossary which make it possible for a student with a basic grasp of Icelandic grammar to read the text without difficulty. £10

Oxford University Press

A century of English ritual

Oliver Taplin

Aeschylus' *Persae*
Bradfield College

If there are any anthropologists among the thrushes that defy the showers of late May which threaten a certain ill-used chalk-pit in the secluded green valley of the Pang to the west of Reading they will have a special interest in a triennial ritual held there. This gathering has been going on for a long time, since 1802 in fact. People converge from far and wide to sit on rough steps up the banks of this much overgrown excavation, where they rustle their waterproof fabrics and watch a group of youths in colourful costume declaim and sing and even dance. Clearly it is a very English ritual. Some bright-eyed storm-cocks may even have spotted that it is not strictly a "ritual", in so far as the performance changes every three years: this year for the first time ever there is even a young female participant.

The very first Bradfield Greek Play was put on in the Dining Hall in March 1882, and contributed notably

to the craze for Greek plays in the 1880s (a craze which reached its peak with the young Jane Harrison's triumph as *Alkestis* at the New Theatre, Oxford in 1887). The school magazine recorded the scene: "the lights in the room being lowered, the curtains of the portico are drawn back and disclose Apollo (F. R. Benson) all radiant... Mr Benson's pose was all that could be desired... As an undergraduate Benson (dubbed Sir Frank in the Royal Box at Drury Lane in 1916) starred as Clytemnestra in the very first revival in ancient Greek in Balliol College hall in June 1890 (Cambridge, Mass. followed in 1891; Cambridge, England in 1892). Soon after, when Jowett the Master of Balliol was Vice-Chancellor, OUDS was founded on condition that the repertoire was restricted to Greek tragedy and Shakespeare, and that ladies took the female parts - a step which Bradfield has taken a century to follow.

In ancient Athens a good *choregos* would spend a lot on arranging for his chorus to have an extended period of intensive rehearsal. One key to the success of the National Theatre's *Oresteia* was the months of rehearsal for the whole company.

But it does not take a monumental Arts Council grant for a boarding school to rehearse a troupe of boys long and hard. And the chorus is, indeed, the specialty of the Bradfield plays: the discipline of their movements and the clarity of their enunciation are most impressive. This may be one of the considerations which led the Director, Christopher Stace, to choose this year, for the first time, Aeschylus' *Persae*, the oldest tragedy in existence, first performed in 472 BC.

There is no making a typical tragedy of it. It is set in Persia a mere six or seven years in the past; it has no direct family conflict, the stuff of so much Greek tragedy; there is no catastrophe during the play - instead, it brings home to Persia a disaster which happened months before and far away in Greece. It is a play of national desolation. Great lists of strange names are intoned: the roll-call of the confident Persians who set off and have not returned. The chorus of elders sings how the whole of Asia has been brought to its knees as they look on the figure of King Xerxes kneeling in defeat. Yet Aeschylus does not caricature or ridicule the Persians; never do they deteriorate into the equivalent of the strutting Nazi who even now metes grotesque come-uppance in cinema and sitting-room.

Aristophanes scored a shrewd hit in his *Frogs* many years later when he had his stage-struck Dionysus recall the grand old *Persians*: he cannot remember quite who it was who was going on about whom or why, but he recalls with delight how the chorus clapped their hands and shouted "laioi". The Bradfield production does not shirk the outlandishness of it all; there is no attempt at a token naturalism, and the oriental colouring is stylized rather than tamely antiquarian. The chorus, convincingly middle-aged if not old, goes through a vigorous range of choreography, swinging their vivid green costumes (which are not quite morning-coats). They are the sound-board for strong and clear performances from the Queen Mother (the revolutionary girl), the advance messenger, the silver ghost of Darius, a kind of Aytollish Commandant, and finally, in blood-stained tatters, the battered puppy-king Xerxes. All in all it is a clear, careful production, confidently spoken and visualized. Yet through and through it is an English ritual. May the Bradfield Greek play flourish as long as there are thrushes in the Berkshire chestnuts and beeches.

Pathetic Portuguese

Patricia Craig

From the Balcony
Cottesloe Theatre

The *Portuguese Letters* of 1669 is a work of fiction written in the epistolary mode, the supposed author being a nun in the grip of an ineradicable passion. Elaborate pleas and recriminations go out from the convent to the unnamed soldier who seduced the sister and then deserted her, in the usual way of the rapacious cavalier. The nun, who acquired the name Mariana in the nineteenth century, is allowed neither a character nor a story but exists merely to communicate a mood: highly-wrought despair.

You cannot make a drama out of a series of exclamations, however heartfelt, or recollections of lost bliss, however exquisitely painful. Patrice Chaplin, the author of this

adaptation, has searched the literature of the last century for an appropriate male voice to accompany the outcries of her Portuguese nun, and come up with Pechorin from Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*. The result is this unlikely amalgam: lyrical hand-wringing at one side of the stage, calculating lustfulness at the other. Neither deprivation nor surfeit leads anywhere.

Morag Hood makes a picturesque nun, and Leigh Lawson a strapping cavalier, but they can do little with the material so limited and repetitive. We know the nun is inconvertible, and the soldier jaded; no need for these conditions to be endlessly expressed. Unimpassioned dejection does not make the nun seem less banal; I think I heard her observe at one point, "A week sun fills the well-behaved space with a lemon light", though I cannot be sure of this. Too-literal translation, or an attempt to be poetic? It is difficult to tell.

Fifty years on: Auden's 'Orators'

The TLS of June 9, 1932 carried the following review by A. C. Brock of *The Orators* by W. H. Auden:

It is not easy to describe this extraordinary composition. It is written partly in verse, some of which is deliberately free from poetic diction, and partly in prose, some of which is poetical.

In the main the work appears to be an ironical and satirical description of life in England today. But Mr Auden's approach is oblique, capricious and, as it were, from a distance; he breaks the ordered world of usage into fragments which he employs both to make a singular pattern of images and conceits, and also, with a satirical intention to display the malign absurdity of organized society, are both his artistic juxta-position and the weapon of his irony. Some of his jokes are simple and high-spirited, but more often he moves in a tangle of allusions and images between which the natural connections are omitted. He delights in modern slang and technical diction which is so new that it has not had a chance to acquire a literary flavour, finding as much pleasure in these difficult and prickly terms as most young poets take in the diction of the old masters. In fact, the words which he seems to like most are those calculated to knock a sonnet to pieces, not only the technical terms

of wireless, aviation, or war, but even the hidden indecencies of vulgar speech, of which he uses a good many. He is insolently but exhilaratingly new, both in his technique and in the matter of his writing.

For, it should be said at once, Mr Auden's composition is not at all silly. Although it is obvious that this disintegrated poetry, and still more this "surrealist" satire, might be one of the easiest of all forms of writing, a mere dribble of disconnections, and if it were so would certainly be one of the dullest, this work is neither of these things. On the other level it is very clever, and Mr Auden's mind works with a fascinating agility. Conceits, parodies, and allusions flow in an unceasing stream from his pen. But, what is more, none of these are in the least, in the least, perfunctory or embarrassing. It is important to recognize this at once, for this is the most common characteristic of such bright young works, and only a mind which is really sincere and an artistic conscience which is really scrupulous can avoid it. This is not to say that Mr Auden's frequent railings and his persistent air of disgust with all the complexities of modern life may not sometimes grow tiresome, but he never commits the artistic fault which commonly goes with such elaborate sophistication. To make a revolutionary manifesto written in violently unconventional and unidiomatic language sound as well tuned, almost as discreet, when it is read as a whole, as an old-fashioned essay on some safe literary subject is obviously an unusual feat; and it is certainly something which no one but a genuine writer could do.

For Mr Auden's message displays the most thoroughgoing contempt for all possible conventions and for the general organization of human life. In the "Journal of an Airman" he describes measures of hostility against safe and organized society so reckless, so violent and so capricious that they are surely beyond the imagination of any political revolutionary, although, to be sure, he concludes with the observation that he has made a terrible mistake and that "the power of the enemy is a function of our resistance", so that the only way to remain unspotted from the world is by complete passivity and retirement. And yet, however strident his message, it is always of second importance to the progress and form of Mr Auden's composition. In his verse he chiefly uses elaborate metres, not unlike those of Gilbert and Sullivan, and turns them with a fascinating effect. And both in his poetry and his prose the quality of his diction, the adjustment of strange images and the fall of the sentence have obviously been throughout his first concern. If his message, his exuberant belief for the new, have led him into any fault, it is only this, that we could wish that he had sometimes aimed more deliberately at beauty and had not always sought to come upon it shy and obliquely.

Author, Author

Competition No 74
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than July 2. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to be opened, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, Times Literary Supplement, PO Box 7, Gray's Inn Road, WC1X 8EZ. The solution and results will appear on July 9.

1. Amongst the horrors of that dream I think the worst lay here. Methought the well-loved dead, who had loved me well in life, met me elsewhere, alienated: galled was my inmost spirit with an unutterable sense of despair about the future. Motive there was none why I should try to recover or wish to live; and yet quite undurable was the pitiless and haughty voice in which Death challenged me to engage his unknown terrors.

2. He dreamed a long, troubled dream... He stood on a raised stage, under his own loom; and looking up at the shape the loom took, and hearing the burial service distinctly read, he knew that he was there to suffer death. In an instant when he stood on fell below him, and he was gone.

3. This August I began to dream of drowning. The dying

went on and on in water as white and clear as the gin I drink each day at half past five.

Competition No 70
Winner: Hubert Morley
Answers:

1. When tobacco came, when Raleigh did first bring the unfaded herb; the plant of peace, the known king of comfort brings, then indeed came to the host of poets. Ivor Gurney, "Tobacco".

2. I could say what I know of the virtue of it, for the expulsion of rheum, raw humour, crudities, obstructions, with thousand of this kind; but I profess myself no quack-salver. Only thus much, by Hercules, I do hold it, and will affirm it, before any Prince in Europe, to be the most sovereign, and precious weed, that ever the earth tendered to the use of man.
Ben Jonson, *Every Man in his Humour*, II, 2.

3. Browning does not speak; it is his greatest defect - but he tells me that after he got to Florence on his way to Rome, he was so disgusted by tobacco he could not find a particular to England & never went to Rome. William Weimere Storey, letter to James Russell Lowell, August 10, 1853.

ENTERTAINMENTS

'Very Strongly Recommended'

Astunningly powerful production...
COLIN BLAKELY
ROSEMARY HARRIS
in ARTHUR MILLER'S longest ever running West End production

ALL MY SONS

Directed by
MICHAEL BLAKEMORE

This is a play and production that makes the rest of theatrical London seem desiccated, bloodless

WYNDHAMS THEATRE
Box Office 01-836 3028 Credit Cards 01-379 8565

Adrian Stokes

1902-72 A retrospective
CRITIC • POET • PAINTER

Paintings, manuscripts
first editions and photographs

Serpentine Gallery,
Kensington Gardens, London W2 Admission Free
8 June-4 July 1982

Arts Council
London

Arts Council
London

Arts Council
London

Arts Council
London

The Harris Case

Sir, - Much as I dislike replying to a review, Anthony Holden's misrepresentation of my book, *Mrs Harris: The Death of the Scoundrel Diet Doctor* (May 14), cannot be allowed to stand uncorrected, not in a responsible journal.

Mr Holden insists that ("whatever else she may say") I wrote my book out of a feminist zeal that blinded me to the fact that Dr Tarnower had been deprived of his life. This is simply untrue. In my report of her trial I clearly dissociate myself from the many women in America and elsewhere who felt that in shooting her faithless lover Mrs Harris was a cultural heroine, redressing the wrongs done to her sex. My chief emphasis as I describe Mrs Harris in court is on the actuality of Dr Tarnower's death and Mrs Harris's manifest wish to distance herself from this physical and moral reality: I remind the reader that while her lover is dead by her hand, Mrs Harris is alive, fighting for her freedom, and I speak with horror of her ability to handle Tarnower's blood-stained sheets without apparent emotional affect and to hear, seemingly unmoved, the chilling details of his final moments. Indeed, my conclusions about Mrs Harris's mental condition are essentially based on my daily observation of her "denial" that she caused Dr Tarnower's death.

Mr Holden writes: "Mrs Trilling does, again on behalf of the Daughters of the American Revolution, by disagreeing with the verdict." Conviction for murder rests on proof of conscious intent. I disagreed with the verdict because, like most of the reporters at the trial, men as well as women, I did not believe that conscious intent had been sufficiently proved - my point is strictly a legal one. I do not know what Mr Holden thinks the DAR is: the left wing of female liberation? I hasten to assure him that his concern is with another revolution and that as the daughter of East-European immigrants I am not qualified to speak in its name.

Finally, Mr Holden quotes both Anthony Powell and William Hazlitt in his review. This is fair enough except that he gives no indication whatever that these quotations come out of my book rather than his own head. On the other hand, he writes: "The only man cited as any kind of social parallel, in a passage mumbled about people killing the things they love, is Oscar Wilde." My single mention of Oscar Wilde appears (p.220) in the following sentence which I quote in its entirety: "Wit isn't a useful instrument of defense;

it may make a short-run appeal but it creates a backlash - one saw this in the Hiss case and the Oppenheimer trial of Oscar Wilde."

DIANA TRILLING,
35 Claremont Avenue, New York City.

'The Mathematical Experience'

Sir, - Jonathan Lear (May 28) and J. M. B. Moss (June 4) seem to suggest that I have been misleading in certain respects, in my review of *The Mathematical Experience* (May 14). I feel that I cannot let their letters pass without comment.

With perhaps some justification, Lear takes me to task for referring only to three viewpoints: formalism, Platonism (or realism) and constructivism (or intuitionism). I appreciate that there is a wide variety of attitudes that can be taken in mathematics and admit to adopting (with some relief) this oversimplified (but not unreasonable) division of possible opinion that was presented in the work under review. However, I strongly take issue with Lear's assertion that Gödel's argument does not directly support Platonism. To deny mathematical Platonism in any form is to deny that the truths of (say) arithmetic have an absolute validity independent of human culture. But what "truths" are the informal proofs of the Gödel type actually "proving" if not such as these? Like any other convincing mathematical argument, such reasoning helps to persuade us of the truth or falsehood of some clearly defined proposition - a truth or falsehood that it is evidently not up to us to decide but merely to discern.

I do not deny that some may take exception to this viewpoint (such as Moss's Gödel-immune formalist who refuses even to call $2+2=4$ "true"). But the working mathematician is continually being confronted by the apparently absolute nature of mathematical truth. Only with very large infinities does possible uncertainty begin to creep in. Aristotle denied the completed infinity, and the present-day constructivists may be regarded, in this respect, as his heirs. Their viewpoints separate into many different strands, a few of which I do have some sympathy for (Lear refers also to Hartley Field, whose expressed views I could argue strongly against if called upon to do so).

Some comments on Moss's highly misleading letter (following his own paragraph numbering):

Among this week's contributors

MICHAEL BANTON is Professor of Sociology at the University of Bristol. His *Racial and Ethnic Competition* will be published in 1982.

ALAN BROWNJOHN's most recent collection of poems is *A Night in the Casbah*, 1981.

ABRAHAM BRUMBERG's *Poland: Genesis of a Revolution* will be published later this year.

HIDLEY BULL is Montague Burton Professor of International Relations at the University of Oxford.

STEPHEN CLARK's books include *The Moral Status of Animals*, 1977.

JOHN CLOUDSLEY-THOMPSON is Professor of Zoology at Birkbeck College, London and President of the British Archaeological Society.

PETER CONRAD's most recent book is *The Medium and Its Message*, which will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

MARILYN D'AMICO is Professor of English at the University of Rome.

NICHOLAS DAVIDSON is a lecturer in History at the University of

KATHERINE DUNCAN-JONES's *Selected Poems of Sir Philip Sidney* was reissued by Clarendon Press in 1980.

KYRL FITZLYON's most recent book is *Before the Revolution*, 1978.

KATE FLINT is a lecturer in English at the University of Bristol.

HENRY GIFFORD's books include *Pasternak: A Critical Study*, 1977.

R. H. HILTON is Professor of History at the University of Birmingham.

KEITH JEFFREY is a lecturer in History at the Ulster Polytechnic.

MAURICE LARKIN is Richard Pares Professor of History at the University of Edinburgh.

RAYMOND LISTER's books include *William Blake*, 1968, and *Infernal Methods: a Study of William Blake's art techniques*, 1975.

MARY LUTYENS's books include: a biography of Sir Edwin Lutyens, 1981.

WILFRID MELLERS's most recent book is *Back and the Dance of God*, 1981.

CHRISTOPHER NORRIS's *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* has just been published.

to the editor

(1) My use of the vague term "led to" no doubt covered a multitude of unexplained by Cantor's revolutionary 1874 paper, by the time that he produced his own book ten years later, would indicate an insensitivity to the prevalent mathematical thinking that I find hard to credit. I do not assert that Frege agreed with Cantor (or with the "formalist philosophy") but his concept of cardinal number displays a strong familial relationship with Cantor's "power" of an infinite set. Certainly Cantor's strongly influenced Russell, and Cantor's proof that there is no largest infinity led Russell directly to his paradox.

(2) I do not deny that others before Hilbert attempted "formalist" schemes, but it is customary to use the term "formalism" only for the much more comprehensive viewpoint arising out of Hilbert's concerted programme (though I should guess that Hilbert, like Frege before him, was philosophically a realist). Hilbert was unquestionably strongly influenced by Cantor.

(3) My statement about the intuitionist's attitude to the occurrence of 100 successive 7s in the decimal expansion of π comes directly from a lecture given by Brouwer which I attended some thirty years ago. No doubt many present-day constructivists take a softer line, but that does not invalidate my point.

(4) A geometry can legitimately be defined axiomatically since it is a self-contained structure. But set theory has to serve for the whole of mathematics. For a set theory "to exist" in my sense it is not sufficient that its axioms be consistent. In particular, any Gödel proposition asserting its consistency must also be as acceptable as any of its axioms. We do not yet know whether non-Cantorian set theories can allow this.

ROGER PENROSE,
University of Oxford Mathematical Institute, 24-29 Giles, Oxford.

The Ethics of Abortion

Sir, - The debate in these columns over whether a foetus is a parasite is getting a little silly. When I observed in *Abortion and Moral Theory* that "pregnancy is a parasitic relation" I did not regard myself as having discovered a novel class of parasites to which biologists might wish to give their attention. Rather, I was attempting to focus attention on features integral to the relation between foetus and mother which should influence the way in which we perceive

fluency the way in which we perceive and think about abortion. One of the problems we face in puzzling over abortion is the lack of an exact parallel elsewhere in our lives to the foetus-mother relation. This fact led me to propose as one model (not the only one) the relation between parasite and host.

How close is the parallel? If recent correspondents to these pages are to be believed, a parasite-host relation exists where (1) the parasite is lodged in or on the body of the host, (2) the parasite is metabolically dependent on the host, but not vice versa, (3) the parasite is harmful to the host to some degree, and (4) normally (though not invariably) parasite and host are heterospecific. Pregnancy easily satisfies the first three conditions, though it departs from the norm in the fourth. This fit seems sufficient for concluding that the parasite-host relation is an illuminating model for the foetus-mother relation, and that we do not gratuitously insult foetuses by regarding them as parasites.

L. W. SUMNER,
4 Southmoor Road, Oxford.

Subsidizing Magazines

Sir, - Reviewing *Modern Poetry: East and West*, James Kirkup concluded (May 14). "One could wish international ventures like this one. There have been a number of attempts to produce a truly international magazine. Most of these are now dead or dying. This anthology is a unique undertaking, and deserves all the support and encouragement we can give it, both poetical and financial."

Without wishing to steal any limelight from Wong Wal-Ming's hundredth issue, may I point out that *New Departures* is a remarkably similar undertaking for all that it stems from British soil, and is alive and kicking for all that it suffers a glaring lack of support or encouragement "in its own country".

Your own paper is, or at least was, an honourable exception to this: in the TLS of August 6, 1964, the early issues of *New Departures* were described as constituting "the most substantial avant-garde magazine in Great Britain". The editorial of the same issue held that "the difficulties encountered by so stimulating a magazine as *New Departures* are lamentable, and would hardly have been so severe in any other western country". It went on to prescribe the obvious remedy: "What is really needed is a more open-minded attitude on the part of the literary establishment."

But the situation since then has got steadily worse, not only for *New Departures*, but also for *Aloes*, *Anbil*, *Aquarius*, *Atlantic Review*, *Curtains*, *Global Tapestry*, *Oleander*, *Poetry Information*, *Resurgence*, *Stereo Headphones*, *Straight Lines*, *Trigram*, *Writers' Forum*, and many other struggling internationalist magazines and little presses - and not only because of recession and inflation. I read Kirkup's piece a couple of days after receiving a note from Charles Osborne, literature Director of the Arts Council of Great Britain, telling me that *New Departures* has once again been unsuccessful in its application to the Council for grant-aid. I've had the same letter every time I've applied, throughout the twenty-three years I've been editing and publishing.

Yet the amounts my fellow missionaries and I have requested have been chipping away at the extreme. This time I'd asked for £1,250 to £1,500 for 1982-3 - an exiguous fraction of the £275,000 allocated to the Arts Council's Literature Committee. Our self-styled Literary Commission, regularly kept this total annual amount down to less than it could have been - and millions of pounds less per annum than has been claimed by any of the other ACGB departments - on the ground that he knows of insufficient

"meritorious" literary enterprise in need of support!

The most recent issue of my magazine managed to publish seventy-two texts by forty-two poets from fifteen countries, including Ireland and Japan, as well as "some of the Russian exiled and 'samizdat' poets" whose absence from the *East and West* collection was regretted by like the large British contingent" your reviewer found "deficient" and (compared to Wal-Ming's *Americans*) "academic, provincial and plain dull" there the eighteen British poets in *New Departures* 14 (even compared to the nine Americans also represented in it) are original, energetic, heterodox and audacious. Half of them are under thirty-five, and more than half more or less unknown.

What a pity the UK's central literary administration is clearly-exception to Kirkup's view, that "Councils and Ministries of Culture are biased in favour of safe, sortable, politically reliable Establishment figures". The main and indicatively long-standing beneficiaries of the Directorate's encouragement to magazines (including, alas, the *Poetry Review* under its new editor, thus far) strike me as almost grotesquely predictable, comfortable, parochial and elitist. If the few surviving attempts to open up to "foreign" or otherwise unfamiliar, nonconformist experimental and adventuresome work continue to be so wilfully ripped in the bud, the rivers of raw material "at home" are that much more likely to stagnate, or dry up altogether. Remember Blake: "Poetry Feels'd, Feels the Human Race! Nations are Destroy'd, or Flourish, in proportion as Their Poetry, Painting and Music are Destroy'd or Flourish!"

MICHAEL HOROVITZ,
New Departures, Bisleigh, Strood, Gloucestershire.

'In Memoriam'

Sir, - Michael Mason's review (May 14) of Sholto and Shaw's edition of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* ends with the question: "What are the 'iron hills' of section 56? Finally, does this section really contain the least reference to evolution, pace the Victorian commentators?"

The "iron hills" are without doubt the sandstone hills of Scotland as described in Hugh Miller's *The Old Red Sandstone*, 1841. They are coloured red by the iron oxide which they contain. In the phrase "seal'd within the iron hills" Tennyson refers to the fossil fishes discovered by Miller in these sandstones, and looks forward to the time when nothing will remain of mankind but such fossils.

Miller's work is one of the basic books of nineteenth-century geology, and it influenced professionals such as Professor Louis Agassiz and Sir Roderick I. Murchison. It does not contain, however, any advocacy of evolution - nor does Tennyson's section 56 (section 55 in my edition) refer to it, as the text could just as well refer to "special creation". Both Miller and Agassiz were believers in "special creation".

JOHN S. KEBABIAN,
308 North Bradford Street, Dover, Delaware 19901

Richard Challoner

Sir, - In his review (May 21) of Esmon Duffy's *Challoner and the Church*, Peter Hebblethwaite implies that Challoner's *Garden of the Soul* has been out of print since the 1960s. I have pleasure in informing you that our society brought out a selection of the edition of 1740 last year and that it is available from me at 50p per copy (including postage).

A. A. HILTON,
Challoner Society, c/o 282, Wetherley, Wigan, Lancashire.

We regret that in last week's issue the photograph of Anthony Caro's *Piece LXXX* was printed upside down.

From renewal to repression

Abraham Brumberg

PETER RAINA

Independent Social Movements in Poland
632pp. London School of Economics and Political Science. Distributed by Orbis Books, £15.
0 85328 073 8

MICHAEL VALE (Editor)

Poland - The State of the Republic: Reports by the Experience and Future Discussion Group (DiP) Warsaw.
231pp. Pluto Press. £4.95.
0 86104 343 X

DENIS MACSHANE

Solidarity: Poland's Independent Trade Union
172pp. Nottingham: Spokesman. £13.95 (paperback, £3.50).
0 85124 318 3

NEAL ASCHERSON

The Polish August: The Self-Limiting Revolution
316pp. Allen Lane. £12.50. (paperback, Penguin £2.95).
0 7139 1469 6

ANDRZEJ SZCZYPORSKI

The Polish Ordeal: The View from Within
Translated by Celina Wieniewska
154pp. Croom Helm. £7.95.
0 7099 2326 6

JOHN TAYLOR

Five Months with Solidarity
123pp. Wildwood House. £2.95.
0 7045 0463 4

The Book of Lech Walesa

203pp. Allen Lane. £8.95. (paperback, Penguin £2.50).
0 7139 1506 4

If shadow enhances the brilliance of light, then the Poland of August 1980-December 1981 must surely shine more brightly because of the darkness now enveloping the country. The contrast between Poland today and Poland in those sixteen months is a stark one. Harder to distinguish are the processes whereby the Poland of Solidarity was brought to a swift and brutal end. All seven books under review, treating as they do the period of "renewal" - its roots, character and (in most cases) its turbulent history up to roughly September 1981 - deal either directly or indirectly with these processes. Here, I shall concentrate on two factors which seem to me central and most open to dispute, inasmuch as they were never wholly resolved within Solidarity or by its allies, and were exacerbated by the recalcitrant and ambivalent attitude of the régime. The first has to do with the fundamental inspirations and aspirations of the "renewal" movement. The second concerns the nature and degree of power which Solidarity hoped to wield, the relationship between Solidarity and the country's rulers, and the kind of compact which could - or could not - be forged between the two.

What lay at the heart of the "renewal" movement? Not only discontent over economic privation, nor even the attempt to transform Poland's political structures - though these issues were, of course, vitally important - but a profound desire to restore the physical and spiritual health of the nation. The "sick man of Europe" was to be cured, once and for all, of the accumulated ills of centuries of foreign rule, abortive insurrections, war, occupation and, finally, an alien socio-political system. The programme document adopted by Solidarity in October 1981 (unfortunately not reproduced in any of the books under review), in which the union proclaimed its intent not only to erect a model of "social, political and cultural pluralism", but also to create the "necessary conditions for the physical, mental and moral development" of the Polish people, provides eloquent testimony to this vision.

The basic inspirations for the genesis of Solidarity were present long before the "renewal" of 1980-81. This is simply borne out by Peter Raina's *Independent Social Movements in Poland*, a competent volume to his *Political Opposition in Poland 1954-1977*. It is not, perhaps, a work of great depth or meticulous scholarship, marred as it is by the author's interest in and academic theories and "model building", and by his repeated failure to place the various "social movements" in a proper analytical and historical framework. In addition, it boasts some startling formulae (eg. the source of Solidarity's "historic development lies in the dynamic character of the Polish mind"), and no less startling misstatements (surely at his trial Miroslaw Chojacki, head of the "unscrupulous" publishing house NOWA, did not address the presiding judge as "Your Lordship"?). For all these objections, the book contains a wealth of documents illustrating the remarkable diversity of issues which animated Polish society in the 1970s, as well as their common denominator. Most of the statements put out by the Solidarity Self-Defence Committee KSS/KOR, for instance, concerned matters such as political persecution, police brutality and freedom of press and conscience. But other KOR documents clearly suggest that in KOR's view, the lack of political pluralism, suppression of truth and violations of legality were the primary manifestations of what it termed the "deteriorating moral condition of the nation". While the Movement for the Defence of Human and Civil Rights (RODGO) laid primary stress on national traditions, patriotism and aspirations for independence, its documents reveal an equally serious concern with broader social and economic problems. The Student Solidarity Committees, organized for the purpose of defending "student rights", also expressed their

intention of "exercising influence" over the "conditions prevailing in the community at large". The community at large was, indeed, the concern of everyone.

More relevant still are the documents compiled by the so-called "Experience and Future" group (DiP), the first two of which have now been made available in their entirety in English. This group, which comprised more than a hundred prominent intellectuals, many of them party members, was permitted to meet only once, in November 1978; both its papers are therefore based on written responses to questionnaires rather than on the minutes of live discussions. They are fascinating for their indictment of the country's social, political and economic system, and also because they reveal that even the "loyal opposition" (in George Schepin's apt phrase) was deeply concerned with how to arrest the process of what it saw as a malignant disease threatening the entire social fabric. Underlying all the respondents' criticism - of the party's industrial and agricultural policies, of growing social inequalities, of the *nomenklatura* system, of stifling censorship - was a fear of the effects of such abuses on the mental and moral state of the nation. The authors called attention to pervasive "cynicism", "indifference", "collective psychosis", "the weakening of social bonds", "the void between the primary groups (family, friends) and the nation as a social totality", the "social pathology" resulting from "the erosion of the rule of law".

The story of DiP touches directly on the second problem examined here - that of power. The "loyal opposition's" diagnosis of the country's ills was indeed similar to that of other groups (such as KOR); so was their belief that proper solutions could be found only by fashioning a new political system both more representative of and more responsive to popular aspirations. Unlike KOR, however, they remained committed to the notion (as Professor Bielecki observed in his introduction to the American edition) that change can be accomplished by addressing the political authorities and reasoning with them concerning the necessity of reforms. How viable was the hope of entering into a dialogue with an élite determined, as both DiP reports concur, to preserve its monopoly of power? And with whom should this dialogue be conducted - with the party rank and file, with the more enlightened members of the *apparatus*, or with those elusive wielders of power in the Politburo and the police and security organs? The need for strong medicine was obvious, but who was to administer it, and how?

The members of DiP forwarded their first report, *On the State of the Republic*, to "the highest political and state authorities", as well as to the moral authorities of Polish society (presumably the Church and prominent intellectuals). When the former not surprisingly chose not to respond, DiP still hesitated to go public; the document was eventually released by the independent publishing house NOWA, with a postscript by Professor Edward Lipinski, of the Institute of Polish Studies, of the University of Chicago, who, in addition, had both the British and American editions, oddly enough, fail to point out that the document was not a "manifesto", but a colloquy, DiP's editorial

committee compiled a second report ("Which Way Out?"), which outlined specific measures to be taken "in the nearest future". As a contribution to the discussions about Poland's problems, its effect was salutary; as an effort to enlist the country's leaders in a common effort to take action, it was a resounding failure.

An even sadder fate befell the third DiP paper, called "The Polish Society after August 1980", and published in the spring of 1981 (see the Polish version in *Kultura*, Paris, September 1981). Nearly a year after the Gdansk Agreement, the prospects of resolving the country's crisis, according to the authors, were slender; "The practical reforms will be worked out in the chamber of politicians who would like nothing better than to forget about the reforms." Nevertheless, the "way out" still lay apparently in an appeal to the enlightened self-interest of the régime. The new document did not explain how politicians so reluctant to implement reforms could be persuaded to bring about a truly "representative" system, or why the party should willingly relinquish its leading role (as the paper urged) in favour of something called a "guiding role", that of an arbiter among contending social and political forces. DiP's continued faith in the power of reason, its moderate tone and its conviction that Poland's rulers were still capable of winning popular support and reasserting the "rich traditions of socialist thought" all doomed it in the eyes of a tired and angry society that had no more confidence in its rulers, precious little patience for complacent gestures, and a deep suspicion of socialist rhetoric. Thus, a once respected and influential body found itself rejected as much by its putative "partner" as by its own erstwhile sympathizers.

In *The Polish August*, Neal Ascherson comments wryly on what he calls the "incompleteness [that] has been a curse of post-war Poland", the failure of both the rulers and their adversaries to act resolutely in a manner consistent with their interests and their principles. For the opposition, Ascherson says, "the natural impetus of 1956, 1970 and indeed of 1980 was to carry on until the régime had been overthrown... [but] Poland's geopolitical situation or 'raison d'état' - in short, the military created an invariable consensus that these rebellions must be artificially slowed up before they had run their course." This he considers part of the "Polish propensity for 'cognitive dissonance', for fatal misperceptions of reality. I am no more persuaded by Ascherson's generalization about the Polish national character than I am impressed by his grasp of history. 1939 was an "agreement through himself" against a German attack. On Solidarity, however, Ascherson is sound. And he is on to something when he observes that the "gap between description and reality" in Poland - often obscured, really on certain matters, such as, by the late 1970s, "where real power lay".

DiP's persistent attempts to engage the "highest authorities" in a "dialogue" is a case in point. But the same true, one wonders, about KOR, whose strategy (well depicted both by Ascherson and by

Denis MacShane, the latter in an admirably lucid and informative volume) differed fundamentally from that of the "loyal opposition"? Unlike DiP, KOR - in keeping with the views of Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuron, set forth in the 1970s - assumed that attempts to convince Poland's rulers, or to treat them as potential allies, were bound to fail; that there was no way of reforming the system from within; that hope lay in establishing "autonomous social movements" which would act essentially as pressure groups forcing the authorities into gradual concessions. Only citizens, organizing themselves independently to look after their own legitimate interests and acting in unison, had a chance of influencing and changing the policies of a régime inherently resistant to change.

Yet even this concept, which in effect advocated negotiating from a position of strength and which envisaged a "partnership" between society and its rulers, was vague as to the precise nature of such a partnership. The activities of KOR (and other like-minded groups, including lay Catholic organizations) before 1980, were aimed at raising the consciousness of and mobilizing society; in this, they were singularly successful. And the creation of Solidarity, with its determination not to be co-opted into the business of running the state, but to represent the interests of industrial workers (and eventually of virtually the whole of society) *vis-à-vis* the state, was a tribute to the strategy elaborated by KOR. But both in theory and practice, this strategy turned out to be based on an underestimation of the tenacity of the ruling élite; furthermore, like the DiP plan, it was not directed at specific and carefully identified centres of power.

When, in the spring of 1981, Solidarity, faced with the immobility and obduracy of the régime, finally decided to assume co-responsibility for governing the country, it clearly went beyond the bounds of its original conception of partnership. Such a dispensation was congruent, rather, with the idea of workers' self-management of factories, a cause which Solidarity now embraced. But on the level of national decision-making, that dispensation made sense only if Solidarity declared itself a political party and became part of a coalition government. This was something Solidarity, though describing itself not merely as a union but as a "broad social movement", understandably declined to do. Instead, its principal slogan became "social control" - a term which figured prominently in the Gdansk Agreement of August 1980, and which now acquired institutional form, as Bronislaw Geremek, chairman of Solidarity's board of advisers (under arrest since December 13), explained in an interview given in November 1981. On Solidarity's "social councils for the country's economy, culture, education, radio and television" were designed "not to govern", but to monitor the government's policies and ensure their proper implementation. In retrospect, it is not difficult to see why the subtle difference between "social control" and "governance" was lost on General Jaruzelski and Co.

A similar failure of reluctance - to come to grips with some of the implications of power in Poland may be discerned in Andrzej Szczypiorski's *The Polish Ordeal*. A gifted novelist and dramatist, Szczypiorski was closely associated with KOR

circles, and many of his writings which the censor had banned appeared in the unofficial literary monthly *Zapis*. *The Polish Ordeal* is an extended personal and historical essay, aimed at providing the Western reader with an understanding of Poland, especially of its most recent past. It is an engaging book, gracefully written, replete with witty and incisive observations. All of this makes some of the author's judgements, of Gomulka, whom he describes as "honest" and "faithful to his principles" (as well as "enlightened" and "wise") seem even more bizarre when conferred on Mieczyslaw Rakowski, for many years editor of the weekly *Polityka* and since February (not as the book has it, March) 1981 Poland's Deputy Prime Minister and Jaruzelski's right-hand man.

The trouble with bestowing such epithets on communist politicians is that the latter are almost invariably apt to confound them. In 1948-49, Gomulka opposed the Stalinist policy of forced collectivization; in addition, he had a distaste for blood-letting; that was enough, presumably, to make him a "liberal". In 1957-58, he turned brutally against those of his supporters who thought that an ideal communist state is one in which workers run factories and writers are free to write as they please. Similarly with Rakowski, who in the 1960s had advocated more rational economic policies and a measure of political liberalization. Himself once a "revisionist", he retained a curious respect for his former friends, and despised thugs and antisemites. After August 1980 - no doubt in all "honesty" - Rakowski welcomed the emergence of Solidarity in the hope that some pressure from below would be good for the party. But once Deputy Premier, he no longer "played tactical games with the apparatus of power" (in Szczypiorski's words); he was now part of it himself. By August 1981 Rakowski's increasingly hostile attitude toward Solidarity made him the "bête-noire of millions of people in Poland". I quote Szczypiorski because while he clearly appreciated Rakowski's new role, he seemed unwilling or unable to draw the appropriate conclusions about it. MacShane, who as a British trade unionist very sensibly assumed from the outset that no organization aimed at defending the interests of workers can ever maintain "a clear-cut division between trade union demands and political demands" was convinced by the spring of 1981 that the issue was one of effective power, not principle. "And there [was] no evidence that the most liberal or reformist of the party leadership [was] willing to surrender it voluntarily." Which certainly holds true for Mieczyslaw Rakowski.

These remarks are not, of course, meant to denigrate Szczypiorski, or the Solidarity leaders. One cannot read any of these books without appreciating the dilemmas faced by Solidarity and its allies, the contradictions embedded in any attempt to fashion a practical strategy out of millennial aspirations, and to apply such a strategy in a struggle with an adversary whose basic aim was the preservation of monopolistic power. There were obstacles even on the level of semantics. "Solidarity's leaders, educated as they were under post-1945 dispensations... had difficulties in expressing exactly what they wanted in language that was completely unambiguous. Self-censorship is unavoidable. Certain subjects are taboo - the leading role of the Party, the Soviet Union, the spread of independent trade unionism to other East European countries." (These words were written before the Solidarity congress of September 1981, when the taboo on the last subject was broken in a resolution appealing to workers in Eastern Europe to emulate their Polish comrades.) But while such self-censorship is politically understandable and necessary it may be, persists, then Solidarity's conceptual framework will remain limited.

During the sixteen months of freedom, the population at large, as well as its spokesmen and leaders, swung continuously between hope and despair, and fear lest their efforts end in catastrophe. The British journalist John Taylor, in his slender volume *Five Months with Solidarity* (a lively personal account of his experiences in Poland from September 1980 until February 1981, followed by a narrative based on secondary sources), describes the euphoria of his friends in Solidarity co-existing with their bleak awareness of the perils of their situation. And the glimpses into Walesa's charismatic personality contained in the excellent compendium, *The Book of Lech Walesa*, demonstrate that Solidarity's top leadership was given to doubt and self-criticism. In an interview Walesa himself said that "we made a very serious mistake at the very beginning. We should have gone out and educated the people... explained things to them, got them to reach a common level of thought. We didn't do it, and it's costing us dear now."

Yet could Solidarity have avoided some of these mistakes and, by pursuing a different course, averted its fate? It seems clear that if in fact an opportunity had existed, it was gone by the summer or early autumn of 1981; by that time the party *apparatus* was merely stalling, continually provoking Solidarity into escalating its demands, and in effect waiting for the proper moment to deliver the final blow. But could the process of denigration have been halted in the early months of 1981? All the authors referred to here agree that one of the most significant developments within the party (a million of whose members had joined Solidarity) which aimed at introducing internal democratic reforms and forcing the

leadership to reach a genuine accord with Solidarity. All agree, too, that the party's Ninth Congress, held in July 1981, proved a great disappointment: while it elected unprecedented democratic by-law and Committee composed largely of new faces, while some of the most odious hard-liners were shown the door, the party emerged more unified and more determined than ever to deal resolutely with its "partner".

According to Szczypiorski, the reason for this was that with all the internal changes, the party was still unable to offer society what it craved above all else, namely, "to rule itself". This was no doubt true. In Ascherson's view, the violent letter criticizing both Kania and Jaruzelski and coming on the heels of massive military manoeuvres in and around Poland, "instantly sobered the haviour" of the party. That the letter did indeed have this effect is undeniable, though it is arguable whether the Soviet Union was ever really serious about an invasion of the political, military and economic costs of which would have been incalculable. (There is no evidence at all for Ascherson's speculation, contained in the postscript to the American edition, that the Jaruzelski coup may have been motivated by the general's assumption "that it was the only way to make Soviet intervention unnecessary.") Certainly the letter was used by those opposed to any concessions (and by those opposing short of the most sweeping concessions would do) to discipline the party, silence its most vociferous "reformers" and thousands of whom left in disgust. And then turn with full force against Solidarity. The hardliners, organized in various "forums" and even boasting their own newspaper, *Rzeczywistość* (Reality), were delighted. From

Moscow came approval and - eventually - all the help needed to execute the military coup. As in the past, Soviet strategy was to support the "loyal" forces within the *apparatus*, not itself to launch an infinitely risky operation. Moscow succeeded, but only because its allies were numerous enough and - more important - strong, determined, and well equipped.

Which brings me back to the question of real power. What if Solidarity, instead of assuming that Polish soldiers would never fire upon fellow-Poles, and that a splendidly patriotic general would never order them to do so, had aimed at capturing the armed forces - the instrument, as it turned out, of its eventual destruction? In an article published recently in *Der Spiegel*, Michnik notes that the party reformers "could attack the bureaucratic structure effectively only if they organized a collective movement, but not as a faction struggling for power." But could a collective movement be fashioned without Solidarity's support? And could then the armed forces - or key elements of the officer corps - have been enlisted in the national cause? (It had happened once before - in October 1956, when Gomulka, with a unified party and society behind him, and ready to pit Polish forces against Soviet, forced Khrushchev to call off an incipient invasion.)

To pose these questions is not, alas, to answer them. In the months preceding the party congress Solidarity was preoccupied with its own confrontations with the régime. And if it didn't forge an alliance with rank-and-file party reformers, it was because it had learned to expect little from a party so thoroughly bankrupt and with so squalid a record of

opportunism and toadyism. Perhaps it should have opted not for power-sharing, but for incremental changes; perhaps its interest might have been better served had it heeded the advice of its moderates who hoped, in MacShane's words, "to make the struggle gradual, to make it a process of de facto compromise and external arbitration." But this, as I have tried to show, was profoundly difficult as much because of the régime's tactics as of the momentum of the labour movement itself. In addition, Solidarity was being eroded by increasing conflicts - between radicals and moderates, between those rooted in social democratic traditions and those inspired by nationalism. The movement even had its own antisemitic group calling itself "genuine Poles" (this goes unmentioned in the books under review). The internecine discussions about goals and programmes and the personal feuds, too, could only deplete the *apparatchiki*, who only a year earlier had seemed to be in a state of shock verging on paralysis. Yet was this avoidable in a movement possessed, from the very beginning, of an almost chivalric passion? Was it feasible to curb natural instincts and political processes, such as ideological diversity, or to be patient and moderate in dealing with an adversary stealthily plotting your demise?

The questions continue, until the armchair observer, however partisan and sympathetic, must stop, defeated by the impossibility of imposing considerations of logic and rationality on a revolution which by definition defied rationality and broke all precedents. Ultimately, he can only admire those in Poland who were as well, if not more, aware of the exasperating dilemmas confronting them, yet resolved to go on.



Thomas Mann
Richard Winston

The making of an artist, 1875-1911. Here at last is a portrait of the artist painted with love and understanding... It is a magical story - and it is magically told. Winston's writing combines reverence with objectivity and readability with a care for detail. Nigel Hamilton, *Sunday Times*. "Winston achieves that special quality which might be termed objective identification which is the mark of a first rate biographer." Julian Jebb, *Spectator*. £12.50

A royal family: Charles I and his family
Patrick Morrah

... Mr Morrah's grip on characters and events is firm and sustained by dependable scholarship... he holds the line and is even-handed. This can count as a considerable triumph... The balance between the story of intimate family relations and the public stuff is for the most part very nicely kept. David Williams, *Spectator*. Illus. £9.95

Secret Intelligence Agent
H. Montgomery Hyde

A revealing account of the author's undercover work in Gibraltar, Bermuda, the West Indies and the USA during World War II. Illus. £8.95

Victorian visionaries
Brenda Colloms

A composite biography of the early Christian socialists whose movement, begun in 1848, was led by John Frederick Denison Maurice. Illus. £12.50

Nursery furniture
Edward Gelles

An illustrated book on children's antique and period furniture, miniature and dolls' house furniture, covering British, European and American collections.

Constable

Tunnel vision

Daniel Johnson

TIMOTHY GARTON ASH

Und willst du nicht mein Bruder sein?
Die DDR heute
208pp. Hamburg: Spiegel Verlag/Kowohl. DM14.

Western observers of East Germany are starved, not only of information - it was a source of surprise for this reader, if of satisfaction for Party Secretary Honecker, to learn that a number of political prisoners there is quite unknown (though it is not fewer than 3,000) - but also of good insights with first-hand experience of this fashionable country, which is the linchpin of the Warsaw Pact. Timothy Garton Ash, who has written excellently for the *Spectator* and *The Times* on Eastern Europe, and on both Germanies offers here a glimpse of what a combination of bad conscience and neo-Stalinism may do to a culture trapped in the vice of a strategic and industrial significance which has even the hope Polish-type experimentation.

In an East German joke, Lenin, which is forced to halt because the track comes to an end. Lenin proposes tearing up the line behind and shoving it in front; Stalin proposes the driver; Honecker draws the blinds in his carriage, smiles, and says: "Off we go!" Tunnel vision, Mr Garton Ash argues, has not only blinded out present and future dangers, but the ghosts of the past too. Though he does not consider that a continuity of personnel between the Third Reich and the GDR has been a major problem, his

discussion of paramilitary youth organizations and of militarism in general suggests another, perhaps more sinister form of persistence. It is well known that the GDR's human exports include, besides disgruntled intellectuals like Bahro or Diermann (delighted to discover that far from being "useless men" they are already honorary members of the West German left-wing establishment), plenty of ordinary criminals. Less well known is the fact that such criminals often become neo-Nazis in gaol - and remain so after they are dumped over the Wall. And not only is the burden of Nazi guilt sloughed off, but the old dislike of neighbouring peoples with longer memories, like the Czechs and Poles, has justified the East Germans in helping to suppress opposition there to far

Kitchen humour

Kyril FitzLyon

Z. DOLOPOLOVA (Editor)

Russia: Laughs: Jokes from Soviet Russia.
125pp. Deutsch. £4.95.
0 233 97402 4

There are several ways of dealing with a book of jokes. One can, for instance, read it from beginning to end at a single sitting or perhaps at two, swallowing the contents in large gulps, like a pint of beer. This is often the reviewer's way, particularly if he is in a hurry. It is the wrong way. It leads to depression and irritability. Then there is the consumer's way - the businessman's, the politician's, the music-hall artist's: strictly utilitarian. The reader is on the look-out for a new funny story, less for the sake of enjoyment than in order to enliven a speech, crush an opponent, suggest a gag, etc. For him a collection of jokes is a handbook to be consulted from time to time in search of material. He will carefully select two or three jokes suitable for the occasion he has in mind and work them in, ignoring the rest till some other occasion. This is vastly superior to the first, and may, in fact, be the right way.

While quietly satisfying the reader with statistical information and digressive analysis, Garton Ash also conjures up places and their inhabitants with remarkable deftness. A literary nation with pitifully few distractions is likely to talk well, and here it is allowed to talk. Garton Ash does not divide up his witnesses according to politics or class; there is no suggestion of a people divisible into non-communists who are good actors and communists who are better actors. One division which he certainly recognizes, however, is that realistic enough to accept the political consequences of their geography and of their elders' follies, yet entitled to demand some sort of coherence from East German intellectuals,

instead get nothing but snubs and moral blackmail. "We suffered, we endured, we plucked the Russian, we gave you what we never had," they are told by those who perhaps spent a comfortable youth in the bourgeois Weimar Republic as cabaret communists. Garton Ash, perhaps, does not do justice to the frightening potential for organized violence among East German youth, though he does permit fatuous figures like Stephen Hermlin to damn themselves with their own self-righteousness. In the Alexanderplatz at the centre of East Berlin Garton Ash was chased by another car. He stopped, and the other driver pointed to the seat belt: "Wird es, duty!" The seat belt, for Garton Ash, is the East German national symbol.

How useful would such a reader find Ms Doloplova's little collection? Not very, I would say - mainly because too many of the jokes are too venerable, their peregrination from country to country, from person to person, has tired them out. "A man ran through the streets of Moscow shouting: Khrushchev is a swine!" He was seized and given twenty-one years for defaming the Party, and twenty years for leaking state secrets. "I've heard this one about Rakosi, and about Hitler before him, and about Mussolini before him." The book, says the editor, "was conceived around the kitchen table of a tiny Russian kitchen". This may well have been so, but its paternity, or at least that of most of its jokes, turns out to be international. Too many of the jokes have a racist taint about them: Russians are dull-witted, Jews smart, Arabs cowardly or stupid. Obviously an embarrassing, even a risky choice for a public speaker.

However, there is a third way of coping with a joke-book - the connoisseur's, the dilettante's (in the original, eighteenth-century sense of the word). This consists in waiting until the mood is just the one and then dipping into the book for the direct enjoyment of it. This is the direct opposite of the first method and is, of course, the best. It is also the

most difficult. There is a fourth way to deal with this particular book. It consists in looking at the illustrations rather than at the text. They are by JAK, which is surely a sufficient recommendation.

Forms of fecklessness

Patricia Craig

DERMOT HEALY

Banished Misfortune
111pp. Allison and Busby. £6.95.
0 85031 456 9

There is a style of writing that depends for its effects on randomness, disorder and slight distortion: it makes everything vaguer and crazier than is altogether natural. It never presents a central idea straightforwardly, but goes in for circuitous approaches to it, or uncontrollable swerving away from it. It puts compulsive sensitivity in the place of clarity and insight, one of its objectives being to render all its images in a heightened way. It's the style adopted by Dermot Healy for his first collection of stories, in which intense, wayward and romantic feeling predominates over simple craftsmanship. If the romanticism is inverted, to accommodate bleakness and disaffection, it is none the less showy; like the American writer Jayne Ann Phillips, Healy is drawn to the picturesquely tainted. A comparable sense of deracination informs his stories too.

The lives he evokes are shady and off-key. The Co Fermagh nymphet-mane of "A Family and a Future", all but retarded - "tanned from wandering the fields after lost cattle she would wander the market on fair day, watched by the treacherous eyes of the stall-holders, in ribbons and patched skirt, huge hips akimbo" - is among the least hopeful of an exceptionally dismaying lot. Healy's

London is a place of windy subways, vagrants, sleepless nights. The city attracts the wilfully feckless, like the disenchanted hero of "Kelly" who keeps a diary to record his conclusions about life, and his unstable Polish acquaintance who sleeps with his eyes open. Fecklessness in the countryside - the Irish countryside - takes a more humble and instinctual form. Here, discoloured canals, bogholes, stray tinkler dwellings make a fitting backdrop to the spasms of violence, episodes of betrayal, alienation, sexual failure and other miseries the stories depict.

Healy's prose, with its faux naïf structure and impassioned undertone, teeters constantly on the brink of self-parody: "As if he knew the laundered space of each guilty psyche" ("A Family and a Future"); "Jim burns with the necessity to get things done, a busy self, he perches on the shoulders of his friend looking at the competing world" ("The Island and the Calves"). Perhaps it's his impotence to get the strong impression down on paper that makes him so regardless of coherence and sense. He is less careless than Desmond Hogan (with whom he has been compared) about the actual meanings of words, but no less avid for expressive eccentricities. The sentence containing many clauses is one of Healy's most persistent foibles:

... she flicked out her own short hair, the holiday at last for real, trying to create some dancing curls, and patted down her fresh autumn dress and knocked the mud of the fields from her shoes, spread out her toes to release the

sweet stiffness of the journey from her body, the stifling impression of having gone nowhere till she smelt the roots of the sea, the girl in her gliding down as Ennis slowed the pipes.

This is from "Banished Misfortune", in which the past is reassembled in bits and pieces - a high window there, a red limestone rock there - rather in the way the newly homeless might root for their possessions after the blitz.

When he writes plainly, Healy can startle us with the vigour and perceptiveness of his observations. "They had burrowed down so deep in anxiety that happiness was nearly hysterical", he says of the Northern Irish family in the little story who take a trip to Galway to ease the pressure caused by living insecurely. He is so good at unembellished description - "He looked out of the window at the small miserable town, the fighting jackdaws on the sagging slates with their burden of moss, the flat roof above Woolworth's with pools of water on its dark green felt" - that we wonder why he doesn't produce it more often. The method he chooses to examine various kinds of deprivation - sexual, social and so forth - is impressive when it comes off ("The Curse", "Love", the title story to an extent), if you discount the more obtrusive mannerisms, and irritatingly pretentious and oblique when it doesn't ("The Island and the Calves"). Incidentally, whoever chose a Gerard Dillon painting for the cover has hit on an almost perfect visual complement to the stories: poverty-stricken, highly-coloured, idiosyncratic, askew.

Sudden deaths

Keith Jeffery

MICHAEL HATFIELD

Spy Fever
186pp. Quartet. £6.50.
0 7043 2310 9

MEG ELIZABETH ATKINS

Pallmpst
224pp. Quartet. £6.50.
0 7043 2310 9

RUTH DUDLEY EDWARDS:

Corridors of Death
186pp. Quartet. £6.50.

The second set of books to be issued under the new Quartet Crime imprint each cover distinct areas of the genre: espionage, ghosts and political intrigue. A common feature is sudden and violent death. Michael Hatfield's novel is the most straightforward of the three. Allan Ballantyne, an apparently accident-prone spy exiled to the department's Central Registry after a bungled operation behind the Iron Curtain, seeks to re-establish his reputation by catching up with his old opponent Zankov. Zankov, in effect a biogenic time-bomb, is carrying a frightful and incurable virus on a suicide mission to wreak havoc on western civilization, or at least the Conservative Party annual conference.

There is a somewhat unconvincing "cold war" flavour to Hatfield's characters. Ballantyne sees himself as "one of the sentinels paid to protect a liberal democratic system ever vulnerable to attack by an alien political creed". His remorseless superior declares that the "only way to beat the Communists and their clenched fist" is to "hit them with another".

While the characterization is occasionally thin, the action is well-paced and exciting - from Sofia, where our hero evades the "vengeful and dreaded" Bulgarian secret police to the ornate halls of the Grand Hotel, Brighton. All the expected elements of an espionage thriller are here: bureaucratic spinners worrying about political implications, a 4½-litre Lagonda Rapide, traitors, and both sides, including a senior KGB agent, desperate roof-top struggle, and, of course, a beautiful woman who not surprisingly distracts Ballantyne from

his chosen profession. The author mixes these ingredients well into a satisfyingly good story.

Pallmpst is for more refined tastes. Neil Singleton, a spinster antique dealer with suppressed psychic powers, finds that an old friend has mysteriously disappeared from her cottage in deepest rural England. In this "entranced landscape" - described in suitably lush, not to say cloying, prose - she finds a community of mostly malevolent feral neighbours. The book is curiously reminiscent of *Cold Comfort Farm*, with ample moral decay, although not the bucolic squalor (nor the humour), and "something nasty" just about everywhere. Fortunately there is a dashing bachelor Chief Inspector to help Miss Singleton through this world of haunted wells, strangely rushing winds and moonlit *Druidic* games.

The nastiness in *Corridors of Death* is less mystical. Ruth Dudley Edwards has written a witty and elegant tale of wrongdoing in Whitehall, where our rulers stab each other in the back, both literally and metaphorically. A Permanent Under Secretary is murdered in a lavatory on the twenty-seventh floor of a government building - this is indeed crime in high places - leaving a profusion of distinguished suspects: politicians, bureaucrats, captains of industry and senior trade unionists.

The central character is the dead man's private secretary, Robert Amis, who from time to time tells us of many civil servants, as if he were participating in a seminar on modern British administration. There is some excuse for this since the author provides us with a suitably uniformed policeman to whom the inner workings of government have to be explained. But Detective Superintendent Millon is a quick learner and soon comes to grips with the arcane practices of civil service life.

The author is herself a former civil servant and it may be that a residual antipathy to loose ends led her to conclude the novel with an all-embracing post mortem which neatly answers every question. It is a mildly disappointing, conventional ending to what is otherwise a splendid murder story. Apart from demonstrating the inherent merit of administrative civil servants' assassinating each other, the book goes some way towards answering the Detective Superintendent's and everyone else's question: "What goes on in bloody Whitehall?"

The insights of the poet

Henry Gifford

BORIS PASTERNAK

Zhenia's Childhood
115pp. Allison and Busby. £6.95.
(paperback £1.95).
0 85031 466 6

Three short stories from early in Pasternak's career are more or less contemporary with the two books of poetry which won him instant fame, *My Sister Life* and *Themes and Variations*. As a set, they first appeared together in 1925. (The blurb wrongly gives this date as 1929.) Alex Brown's translation - the one used here, though his name has been omitted - was first published in 1959 by Elek Books.

From the start Pasternak was as much interested in writing prose as poetry. He intended *Zhenia's Childhood* to be the opening of a large-scale novel, broken off at this point, which may be seen as a first move towards *Doctor Zhivago*. One critic, Michel Accouturier, has described it as "a sketch for that novel of feminine destiny later incarnated in the person of Lara Antipova", and he detects a precursor of her husband Pasha in Polivanov of *Aerial Routes* (the last story here), another senile, with a hard impersonality.

The remaining stories, *Il Tratto di Appelle* and *Letters from Tula*, are lighter than these two, and more

self-conscious in their modernism. But they deal, as Accouturier noted, with a theme of great significance for Pasternak, that of the poet's affinity to the actor. For both a "supreme spontaneity" can arise from technique and artifice, and Hamlet in *Zhenia's* poem of that name takes on a role requiring submission to the drama of destiny.

A reviewer of the volume that came out in 1925, Konstantin Loks, who well understood Pasternak's purposes, wrote of the particular attention that prose demands when embodying the insights of the poet (an attention which Henry James also took for granted). In such prose each recorded element has a "close implication", an "extreme intimacy" with every other. *Zhenia's Childhood* was for him the confession of an artist who has immersed himself in the profound, primitive, almost pre-verbal life of sensation, of the first testing experience. Her story is concerned with finding the right names for things. It is the right names, supposed by many who read these tales that they had no subject. Even Zamyatin came to this conclusion: he admired Pasternak's "innovative prose mainly for its syntax. It does indeed articulate the most subtle of impressions with the keenest accuracy. Pasternak declared at this time that prose and verse were inseparable poles. Between his experiments in both there was a continual interplay."

It is not easy to convey the nuances and to handle the complex-

ity of such prose in translation. Alex Brown produced a lively and readable version, which shows considerable resource, and so far as is practicable conforms to the movement of the original. But there are a number of slips (like *Oulashia* and *Trestkov*). Thus *Zhenia's* experience of crossing into Asia is slightly distorted. "Dull, dusty old Europe" kept postponing the moment of war (which turned into anti-climax) and "clumsily" but "sluggishly". She was not "put out" but "taken aback". Her brother's "wild shriek" of recognition as the boundary post flashes past. What was borne away from the train becomes "a fabulous legend" rather than "a fabulous name" (but names are important in this story). Again, when her mother's presence delivers throws the household into confusion, the maid comforts *Zhenia* with a whisper that should be "heart-rending", and not "exhausting". There are similar slips that could be pointed to. The last twenty years have shown a marked improvement in the accuracy of translations from Russian. It is a pity that this volume is allowed to stand without any revision.

Ali Diew Inconnu, by Petri Dumi, which was reviewed in the TLS on January 15 will shortly appear in an English translation by James Kirkup. To *The Unknown God* (Collins, £6.95, 00 01 216 358 6) will be published on July 26.

A case of curing

Peter Kemp

MARGARET ATWOOD

Bodily Harm
301pp. Cape. £7.50
0 224 02016 1

The tone of Margaret Atwood's books varies considerably; the subject-matter remains constant - trial by ordeal. Her heroine in *Surfacing* was surreally goaded through derangement into self-discovery. The *Edible Woman* and *Lady Oracle* mixed farce and fearfulness in their accounts of women experiencing a fight through breakdown to recovery. Now, in *Bodily Harm*, trauma is explored with glitteringly grim precision.

When the novel opens, Rennie, a Canadian journalist specializing in "lifestyles" - she has a professional eye for voguish externals, chic ephemera - is in a state of post-operative shock. A partial mastectomy, though seemingly successful, has left her feeling, like the protagonist of *Surfacing*, "detached, terminal". Fear of death is stopping her from living.

Like many of Margaret Atwood's central characters, Rennie is a twofold person. Her exterior is confident, stylish. Under this veneer, though, "languid in her" by a repressive upbringing, lie concealed anxieties and insecurities. Breaking down her facade, the operation splits these open. And at the same time, Rennie comes to feel, it makes her a misfit in the glossy hedonistic circles that she now inhabits. There's no room for the smarting in the world of the smart.

Most of Rennie's associates are enmeshed of surfaces. Jake, her lover, designs packaging; after re-

doing her flat, he has gone on to start up their relationship into a matter of leasy outfits, sexy games, not entirely self-mocking rituals. Jocasta, her closest female friend, is also devoted to top dressing: she runs a fashionable second-hand store called "Ripped Off" that "specialized in violently ugly clothes from the fifties". Modishly outré in exhumed rig-outs, she is all blasé, bizarre exterior.

Glacially satiric scenes show Rennie's raw wretchedness causing consternation in this chromium-plated ambience. Faced with the genuinely abnormal, the artificially freakish are at a loss. This in itself could constitute a neatly mordant novel - the suave and emancipated shocked into embarrassment by the last taboo. But it proves to be just the initial stage of Rennie's redemptive purgatory. Unable to cope with her newly hampered life, she leaves for the Caribbean on what she assumes will be tantamount to a therapeutic holiday: an assignment to produce a slick travel piece. Congratulating herself on her good fortune in being able to engineer such "small absences from real life", Rennie heads for one of the less-developed islands.

What follows is a process that drives her out of terrified self-pity into a horrified compassion. Disparagingly, rapidly sets in - at first fairly comic - Margaret Atwood always excels at making even the ordinary seem weird: staple ingredients of life like food are often, in her fiction, looked at with vivid obliquity that turns them into something queasily alien. In *Bodily Harm*, the Caribbean setting heightens the pervasive, eerie sense of life's foreignness: "There are a lot of things here that Rennie has no name for." Even the vegetation seems monstrously mutated: "obese plants with rubbery ear-shaped leaves and fruit like warts, like glands". The natives are opaque hostile. Rennie's ignorance of local habits causes grotesque

gaffes. But, for a deceptive while, everything is safely contained within the realm of asstringent social comedy. It is only with the holding of the island's first elections that the toy scares which have briefly startled Rennie yield to real danger.

Violent corruption, breaking through the surface, shows itself to be appallingly extensive. With a kind of inexorable arbitrariness that is particularly disturbing, Rennie is subjected to an experience even more harrowing than the surgery that earlier traumatized her. And, with grisly irony, the vocabulary central to this second ordeal is technically appropriate to the first. "Malignancy" takes on new significance. Rennie, who has had nightmares about abnormal cells proliferating inside her, ends up, through proliferating abnormality, inside a cell. "Massive involvement", and once used with cancer patients by Rennie of emotional bookishness, spreads its implications into other areas. Suspected of serious political involvement, she is abruptly cut off from what she has hitherto regarded as ordinary existence. The messy abominations that ensue drastically alter her assessment of what constitutes real life. When the book closes, Rennie is massively involved in a healthy way: as a very different kind of journalist, she is set to fight for the damaged and exploited. A sense of life's short, precarious span no longer paralyses her into self-centred apathy; it galvanizes her into urgent participation. She is, we are finally assured, "paying attention".

Margaret Atwood has paid attention, too, steadily contemplating the unnerving. What makes her book so considerable an achievement is the mature, informed accuracy of its view of life. What makes it so exhilarating is the profusion of tough wit and precise poetry that everywhere transforms its black bulletins from documentary into art.

Seen to be being seen

Rosemary Jackson

Sue Roe

Estelle: Her Expectations
156pp. Brighton: Harvester. £6.95.
0 7108 0465 2

The main pre-text for this novel is, as the title suggests, another text - Dickens' *Great Expectations* - and its thesis could be Foucault's, that any discourse repeats another discourse in a different mode. Dickens' novel has been de-gutted and re-made according to theoretical and feminist principles to retain only a skeletal outline of its original structure, with its namesakes inhabiting a contemporary French-flavoured setting. Estelle, a dilettante painter and writer, lodges with a dancer, an ex-Isadora Duncan version of Miss Havisham, with Mercy, an alleged image of motherhood for the basement. Pip has been marginalized into a peripheral child presence (presumably) one-dimensional literary stereotypes - for Estelle evokes a post-modernist, post-Oedipal, post-feminist, post-Deleuze, post-Lacan, post-structuralist construction of themselves as "women".

Painting and dancing are best ... In painting or dancing you start with an idea and you paint or dance the body to express it. But in writing, you start with an idea that's in language; and you have to use language to express it. So you can't get the feel of the edge between what you want to say and the tools you have to say it with. ... You can't get between writing and what you're writing.

This is the aim of Roe's work: to create, or feel out, this "edge". To this end, Estelle is reflexive and self-conscious, referring both to itself and to other cultural constructs: it evokes by name Dashiell, Stravinsky, Satie, Freud, Gertrude Stein, the faces of Sarah Bernhardt, Greta Garbo, Marilyn Monroe, the abstract paintings of Piet Mondrian, the faces of Yves St Laurent, Louis Elms, Alfa

negative portraits of women in art, and so speaks something long unsaid. "Estelle cries the frustration of an abstraction she cannot altogether identify. Wanting, above all, to feel connected to something which escapes her." As a critical intervention in a predominantly male system of representation, *Estelle* is an unsettling, experimental work.

Part of its interrogation of dominant forms lies in its attempt to dissolve the boundaries of the novel. Parallel to her attempt to create images of the "pre-image", Sue Roe tries to find words for the pre-verbal, close to the sensations of sight. Visual art is upheld as the ideal to which the novel should approximate - "I'd want to write a still life", says Estelle - and in many ways this novel is an Impressionist painting: a collage of images, a mosaic of the very minimal narrative. Splashes of vivid colour stand out brilliantly against a shadowy grey background, as language itself is rendered a more painterly medium, both fluid and opaque. Words lose their rigidity, to move closer to the visual and bodily arts of painting and dance - as Estelle reflects:

Painting and dancing are best ... In painting or dancing you start with an idea and you paint or dance the body to express it. But in writing, you start with an idea that's in language; and you have to use language to express it. So you can't get the feel of the edge between what you want to say and the tools you have to say it with. ... You can't get between writing and what you're writing.

The American Book Awards have recently announced a list of titles which have been nominated for the 1982. The fiction section, which is divided into hardback, paperback and first novel categories includes *The Hotel New Hampshire* by John Irving, *Rabbit, R. Rich* by John Updike, *Dad* by William Whitton, *Second Coming* by Walker Percy, *Love Lake* by E. L. Doctorow, *Saving Grace* by Celia Gittelson and *Easy Travel to Other Planets* by Ted Mooney.

Romeos, and the rich surfaces of consumerism. At times it reads like a fictionalized feminist version of Barthes' *Mythologies*.

All this experimentalism and theoretical sophistication notwithstanding, there is something decadent about the enterprise. As Gustave Moreau wrote: "there is a moment when an art begins to take on the characteristics of other arts", which can be identified as "decadence"; *Estelle*, positioned between fiction, fine art and theory, confirms this idea. Not only is decay its subtitle and symbol - "borrowing" from Dickens metaphor of the rotting wedding dress and cake, of Gothic enclosure, inertia, cobwebs - but its main concern is with the reflection, the sign, the image, as self-referential objects, reinforcing the idea of art's divorce from life and its entrapment within its own signifying process. It is as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the material world itself has been lost - an absorption with the problems of visibility and of constructing image has lost touch here with a wider vision which, for all its as if, with the very attempt to give materiality to a "space", an "edge", all sight of the

Bent on destruction

Stanley Weintraub

ARNOLD SILVER

Bernard Shaw: The Darker Side
353pp. Stanford University Press.
\$25.
0 8047 1091 0

Arnold Silver has identified "a basic and hitherto unrecognized conflict" in Bernard Shaw. "between his humane and destructive impulses, with the latter seen to possess homicidal and sadomasochistic features". Silver postulates that these elements, which he visualizes as dominating the playwright's life, thought and work, emerged from unresolved oedipal relationships. This pathology, he theorizes, which came to a climax in his sexual rejection by Stella ("Mrs. Pat") Campbell, the Eliza Doolittle of *Pygmalion*, impelled Shaw to pursue bitter revenge against her which further accentuated the "homicidal" qualities of his subsequent plays. From *Heartbreak House* on, players who have found Shawian drama cerebral and bloodless will brush Silver's theory aside, but those who sense in Shaw's theatre a fertile sub-conscious life and a passionate active life upon which he drew for character and situation, will want to examine the alleged "darker side".

Silver begins with a premise borrowed from a fascinating piece of biographical detective work published in 1964 by B. C. Rosset and now out of print, *Shaw of Dublin: The Formative Years*. The kernel of Rosset's book, supported by circumstantial evidence both in and out of the plays, was that Shaw worried all his life that he might not have been his father's son, but was instead the offspring of his mother's ubiquitous music tutor, G. J. Vandeleur Lee, and that his uncertainties about his paternity entered into the inner life of his plays. Silver's follow-up is that Shaw had to create for himself a stainless "Virgin Mother" figure in life as well as in art to symbolize an unattainable ideal. Shaw's obsession exacerbated oedipal dilemmas which in most men fade with maturity. Silver sees *Pygmalion*, in which Henry Higgins is clearly warped by a mother fixation, as the crucial work in the Shawian canon, for the play was written for an actress with whom Shaw was in love, and who, would, between the completion of the play and its production, refuse to bed down with him, thus preserving their mutual virtue (and Shaw's unconsummated marriage with Charlotte). But incurring his impenetrable enmity.

For Silver, *Candida* becomes the first key play. In fact Shaw's self-conscious "Virgin Mother" play. Silver recognizes no irony in Shawian writing. In the eighteen-year-old poet Eugene Marchbanks's unrequited passion for a thirty-three-year-old mother, *Candida*, Morell, he sees powerful oedipal passions stirring, the "emotional strength" in the play emanating from the authors' "lifelong involvement with his own mother". A thirty-eight-year-old bachelor, Shaw was still living in Flory Square with his mother when he wrote *Candida*. His mistress, the actress Florence Farr, lived on the other side of London, in a flat in Hammersmith. Since his income from writing was still very small, he had little alternative. However, he and his mother, as Shaw's diaries make clear, saw little of each other except in passing, and he rarely sat down to a meal with her, rising late to prepare his own grim breakfast and eating lunches and dinners at vegetarian restaurants. Now and then a rare tea with Lucinda Shaw (when there was a guest) was a remarkable occurrence as to be recorded in his diary.

Still, Silver sees *Candida* as a parvasitically ideal fantasy, which - if it is as appears to be - the strange variety in which the young man is terrified of sex and relieved to be rescued from imminent seduction by the fortuitous return of *Candida*'s husband. Shaw's actual mother play, *Capitain Brassbound's Conversion*, its Lady Cicely role written five years later for Ellen Terry, because she had

complained to Shaw that there were no romantic parts for a grandmother - gets only a single sentence in *The Darker Side*. Yet the manly Brassbound pants for the somewhat older Lady Cicely, desiring in her the mother he has never known as well as a wife; but she opts to remain free.

At the time Shaw wrote *Brassbound* he had just wed Charlotte in a marriage which was to remain, at her insistence and to Shaw's disappointment, unconsummated. As has been shown by earlier critics, the evidences of the celibate marriage and Shaw's feelings were long reflected in the plays he wrote. Silver, however, sees Shaw's turning away from physical sex in later plays as a sub-conscious means of avoiding psychologically "the crime of incest and its attendant punishment of castration". Besides, he adds in all seriousness, "Charlotte's virginity within marriage proved, retroactively, as it were, that Lucinda Shaw had been chaste in her marriage, was in a sense a virgin mother, . . . not disloyal to the boy who had worshipped her."

Shaw's exalting involvement with Mrs Campbell a dozen years after his marriage becomes for Silver a gloss on *Pygmalion* as well as a major inspiration for it. Although, like most of Shawian theatre, it is drawn from a complex strand of motives and sources, it is also well established from a letter to Ellen Terry, as well as Shaw's dramatic reviews, that he had succumbed to the allure of Stella Campbell in the middle 1890s and was already thinking about writing a play in which she would be a Cockney flower-girl. Composed from March to June 1912, it was in part, as Silver suggests, an ecstatic love-offering to Mrs Campbell, who

had reciprocated Shaw's feelings sufficiently to tease him into all sorts of infidelities to Charlotte except, possibly, the final one. There are even a few lines in the play which have their parallels in Shaw's letters to Mrs Campbell. The major problem in seeing *Pygmalion* as a lens upon the relationship and upon Shaw's final rejection, is that he finished the play long before the affair reached its apogee - or its end, with Stella's spurning of him in August 1913. "One must resist the thought that Shaw kept consulting her play as the relationship with Mrs Campbell proceeded", Silver writes. Yet he himself cannot resist it, and is forced, finally, since the play will not prove his interpretation, to turn to the much later film. There, he sees Higgins softened sympathetically, and Eliza now "tortured" - Shaw having nursed his cruelty toward Mrs Campbell until the opportunity to alter "her" play arose.

The allegations that he "improved" Higgins at the expense of a more brutalized Eliza are neither accurate nor credible, although film direction and box-office casting did romanticize Higgins. Even into the 1930s, however, when Mrs Campbell needed money, and Shaw refused to let her publish his letters which would have hurt Charlotte, he had every reason to recall his frustrations with her and her stage partner, Herbert Beerbohm Tree. Their deliberate sentimentalization had distorted *Pygmalion*'s brilliantly brittle, ironic lines. Silver ignores that aspect of the play's first run in which Mrs Pat and Beerbohm Tree added impromptu dialogue to suggest that Eliza would return to stay, and even embraced passionately at the curtain calls to suggest the sentimental close which Shaw's ironies forbade.

The woman who had first played Eliza had wronged him doubly. However much Shaw may have forced his attentions upon her, she had reciprocated them. In its first run in London she had spurned his play, as she did him, by the perverse way in which she played it. Yet during the war years, when - more difficult in personality than ever - she was ageing unattractively into her fifties, Shaw loyally permitted her to play the bread-and-butter role of the eighteen-year-old Eliza. But he would not have her play other roles unsuited to her failing powers - a practice in which he was far from alone among playwrights - even when, as in *Heartbreak House*, he wrote a rôle (Hesione Hushabye) based upon memories of her siren days, or, as in *The Apple Cart*, an "Interlude" about the King's "official" mistress, Orlinda, which portrayed the 1912-13 Shaw-Stella episode with nostalgic inaccuracy.

It was no "vendetta" Shaw pursued in not offering a faded actress to whom few others offered new rôles any of his own, especially when she would have been miscast in them. Silver, however, sees "the playwright's revenge" (actually the title of his final chapter) as increasingly "sadomasochistic" turning Shaw more and more into a "homicidal" misogynist. A favourite rhetorical strategy in the book is the assumption of the reader's acceptance of authorial logic at every stage. Thus Silver concludes, having "established" our belief in his vendetta theory (with its inexorably oedipal origins), "We may therefore reasonably connect Shaw's annihilation of the beautiful girl who represents love in *The Simpleton* of 1934, or his torture of Eliza Doolittle in the

[film] revisions to *Pygmalion* of 1934-38, with his defense of Mussolini's 1935 bombings of Abyssinia and of Stalin's bloodthirsty purges of the 1930s."

It is incontestably true that Bernard Shaw was a complex and sometimes infuriating creative personality. Disappointed with the failures of between-the-war democracies, he stubbornly flitted with more extreme solutions as to how man might be more effectively governed. And in both his prose and his plays he insisted that one had to earn one's right to live. We could do with a serious study of how much of these later writings is aberrant (and why) and how much dramatic metaphor intended to provoke a listless West into solving its problems before it went under. Silver's own study cannot be taken seriously, however, when he concludes, "My point is that Shaw's emotional involvement with killing increased, as did the frequency of his advocating it, after the sexual frustrations of his marriage had begun to take hold on his thought." Moreover, one can read this tidy oversimplification as early as page 20. There Silver observes contentedly, "I was particularly loath to exclude such outstanding plays as *Caesar and Cleopatra*, *Major Barbara*, *Heartbreak House* and *Saint Joan*. These will receive full consideration in future volumes of this study."

None of us is without a darker side, and Shaw's psychology, since it gave energy to the most significant body of writing for the English stage since Shakespeare, is worth examining. It is difficult to read much credence, however, to Silver's more extreme claims.

ART HISTORY

Prophecies of progression

Raymond Lister

ROBERT N. ESSICK and MORTON D. PALEY

Robert Blair's The Grave: Illustrated by William Blake
210pp. Scolar Press. £45.
0 85967 529 7

Robert N. Essick and Morton D. Paley have for some time collaborated in the examination of William Blake's illustrations for Robert Blair's poem *The Grave*. As long ago as 1975 they published in *The Book Collector* a valuable study of the printings of this work. The present book now collects the results of all these researches.

The Grave was an unlucky work for Blake. It should at last have given him a popular reputation but it did little more than bring him a miserable twenty guineas. The engravings were commissioned by Robert Hartley Cromek. Blake wrote to his former patron William Hayley in 1805, giving him the news of this, adding that "I produced about twenty designs which please so well that he, with the same liberality with which he set me about the Drawings, has now set me to Engrave them."

But Cromek, despite publicly announcing that the engravings - a more financially rewarding job than the designs - were to be by Blake, gave them over to the conventional Louis Schiavonetti. Blake was indignant, but impotent; however he made a further drawing to accom-

pany some lines in which he dedicated his illustrations to Queen Charlotte, asking Cromek to pay him four guineas for it. It is a beautiful drawing, rightly compared by Essick and Paley with the title page of *The Book of Thel*, but Cromek rejected it together with what was used for four guineas, in a letter of supercilious arrogance. Little wonder that Blake referred to him in his Notebook as "Bob Screwmuch".

Much was lost to posterity through Cromek's perfidy. It is thought that Blake would have executed the engravings in white line; his white-line design "Death's Door" is reproduced on plate 13 of this book, and the authors think this was used for the "Specimen of the Style of Engraving" advertised in Cromek's first prospectus for *The Grave*. Its rugged simplicity recalls many designs in the illuminated books, including *America*, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. It has a quality suggesting that the design was released from the plate, as described in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, where Blake speaks of "printing in the infernal method, by corrosives . . . melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid."

Whatever we may think of Schiavonetti's engraving (actually a mixture of etching and engraving or drypoint) of the same design, there is nothing in it of "displaying the infinite which was hid". It is a thoroughly ordinary interpretation of Blake's concept, using contemporary conventions of shading and modelling that any engraver might have used to

reproduce any design by any artist. It says much for Blake that his designs retain much of their power after this treatment, despite the absence of the grandeur his own engraving would have imparted to them as the authors rightly comment, Schiavonetti's interpretations "substitute competence for genius".

Blake made a number of designs rejected by Cromek. These, with preliminary sketches for the accepted designs, are included and the rejection of some of them is somewhat surprising. "The Gambols of Ghosts" for instance. This drawing, now in the Yale Centre for British Art, was to illustrate the lines:

Well do I know thee by thy trusty yew,
Cheerless, unsocial plant! that loves to dwell
Midst skulls and coffins, epitaphs and worms;
Where light-heed'd ghosts and visionary shades,
Beneath the wan cold moon (as fane reports)
Embodied thick, perform their mystic rounds.

But it is a crowded and complicated design and perhaps Cromek thought that one such design - "The Day of Judgment" - was enough; or perhaps Schiavonetti demanded more pay to engrave such a detailed subject.

In 1963 Brown University Press issued a facsimile of these illustrations, with a commentary by S. Foster Damon, under the title of *Blake's Grave*. Foster Damon believed that Blake depicted Blair's poem and used the illustrations to make a separate visual "poem" of his own. There is much to be said for this view, for Blake's mind was always indepen-

dent. Moreover the author of the commentary on the designs in the original edition (probably Benjamin Heath Malkin) wrote: "These Designs, detached from the Work they embellish, form of themselves a most interesting Poem." This was preceded by the comment: "By the arrangement here made, the regular progression of Man, from his first descent into the Vale of Death, to his last admission into Life eternal, is exhibited." Damon claimed that this meant that such arrangement, "is to be understood as a Prophetic Book".

The present authors do not go so far as that, but they are aware of an independent approach on Blake's part and of a certain rhythmic arrangement of the plates, which they claim fall naturally into pairs:

Plate 1, arising from the grave -
Plate 2, descending into the grave
Plate 3, companions in heaven -
Plate 4, companions in the tomb
Plate 5, death of the wicked man -
Plate 10, death of the good man
Plate 6, parting of soul and body -
Plate 12, reunion of soul and body
Plate 9, the soul entering the tomb with the body above -
Plate 11, the body entering the tomb with the soul above.

Blake's own ideas come through in several ways. The soul, for example, in Plates 6 and 12, is shown as female, though the body is male. This agrees with Blake's idea of the female Emanation or *anima*, the

source of man's inspiration, which is often submerged in the earthly life, but which joins his spiritual body in Eternity. This differs completely from Blair's concept which sees the soul and the body as two separate entities.

As for Blair's poem, this, the most famous poem of the "Graveyard School" was printed in edition after edition for at least a century after its first publication in 1743. Yet it is now hardly read at all. Some idea of its popularity in certain puritan circles during the nineteenth century may be gathered from the amusing incident in Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son*, when the child Edmund, at a party, was asked if he would recite "some sweet stanzas", and repeated some lines from *The Grave*, one of the books his puritan father allowed him to read:

If death were nothing, and nought after
If when men died at once they ceased to be,
Returning to the barren womb of nothing
Whence first they sprung, then might the
He was quickly stopped by his hostess's sister, who said firmly, "Thank you dear, that will do nicely!"

There is a world of difference between Blair's "barren womb of nothing" and Blake's vision of consummation, at the end of *Jerusalem*:

All Human Forms Identified, even Tree,
Metal, Earth & Stone; all
Human Forms Identified, living, going
forth & returning veiled
Into the Planetary lives of Years,
Months, Days & Hours; reposing,
And then Awakening into his Bosom in the
Life of Immortality.

But Blake has imparted something of this vision to his designs for *The Grave*, emanated though they are by Schiavonetti's treatment.

This book is beautifully produced, though in the reviewer's copy there are a few of those blemishes apparently inseparable from the photo-lithographic process. But on the whole Blake and the authors have been served well. It is a pity that the authors give only references to quotations from Blake in David V. Erdman's *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*; it would not have been much extra trouble to quote them also in Sir Geoffrey Keynes's *The Complete Writings of William Blake*, still to many scholars the main work of reference.

Irreparably estranged

Brian Rotman

JOHN ORR
Tragic Drama and Modern Society
280pp. Macmillan. £15.
0 333 24083 9

The idea of tragedy has a wide currency. We speak of tragic accidents, tragic lives, tragic stories, tragic mistakes, and of course tragic plays. On the principle that life imitates art, some of these senses spring from our notion of tragedy on the stage, though the reverse is clearly true, too. John Orr's book, though a sociological study of drama and society, does not concern itself with any social (non-theatrical) sense of "tragic". His concern is the neo-Aristotelian one of categorization: how is a modern tragedy as it is to be found in the plays of Ibsen, Chekhov, O'Neill, Williams, Miller?

In the beginning was Greek tragedy: universal man's fate played out in the presence of the gods. Then Renaissance: the "doomed grandeur" of man-as-noble, while his feudal rank and person are pulled apart. After this the true theatre went dark, to be reopened by Ibsen as the "tragedy of bourgeois alienation" in which modern (bourgeois) man acts out his isolation and estrangement from (bourgeois) society.

How are we to recognize such an acting out, John Orr asks? By the presence in a play of "tragic strife", which is a "climactic confrontation between the dramatic personae and the cultural values of the bourgeois social order." A play is a tragedy if such strife is the dramatic resolution of social alienation.

A movement present in the social fabric of the theme and equally in the sequential flow of the action itself. Within this flow the traditional Aristotelian elements are usually incorporated and given social resonances. The reversal of personal fortune becomes a key element in the dynamic process of estrangement, the self-recognition

of tragic fate a liberating of social consciousness which comes too late to alter the experience of loss.

Orr finds it of primary significance that the tragedy of bourgeois alienation - originated in Norway, Russia and Ireland, in the cultural outskirts of Europe. For here, not only were the bourgeois estranged from their own social order, but this very order was subject to a dislocating dialectic of periphery against centre, giving to the oppositions of noble/bourgeois and family/society the further tragic dimension of wilderness/civilization; an opposition invisible within the cultural centres of London and Paris.

In Orr's conception tragedy is realistic in its subject-matter and naturalistic in its theatrical form. It portrays "irreparable human loss" suffered by socially and domestically rooted individuals. It operates, as Orr repeatedly says, within the conventions of "figural realism". Consequently Orr has little to say about the possibilities of tragic theme arising from the theatre of mask, verse, mime, music and ritual. What he does offer is a solid, ordered survey of realist tragedy from Ibsen to Arthur Miller, well researched and full of examples of close textual attention to particular plays, so that many interesting and intelligent points are made. He also makes some not so intelligent points - or rather employs a not so intelligent strategy. His account is constantly distorted by the attempt to identify Tragic Great Tragedies. The model - "a tragedy" - is pinned only on plays that exhibit "authentic" tragic strife, deep-rooted bourgeois alienation, and so on. Thus Ibsen achieves it, for example, in *The Wild Duck*, *Rosmersholm* and *John Gabriel Borkman*, but not in *Ghosts*. *The Doll's House* or *The Master Builder* (When *We Dead Awaken*, patently not about bourgeois alienation, isn't mentioned.) Chekhov's *The Seagull* and *The Cherry Orchard* (despite Chekhov's refusal of the epithet) are authentic tragedies. *The Three Sisters* isn't. And so it goes through the plays of Yeats and Synge to O'Neill's *Shadow of the Gunman* gets the model, and then, via a highly tenuous "fish connection" to O'Neill, whose *Long Day's Journey*

into Night provides Orr with the most perfect and total example of tragic bourgeois alienation:

O'Neill among all modern writers has produced the most prophetic vision of human extinction on a scale made possible by nuclear war. The personal darkness is also the darkness of the universe as a whole. It is a darkness more intense and resounding than anything Beckett subsequently created during a period when the possibility became widely known, and it ranges back and forth without constraint from the personal to the social and from the social to the universal. The night of O'Neill's play is the darkness of the twentieth century fully brought to light. Concentrated in the life of one family, it explodes outwards to embrace the whole of modern civilization.

O'Neill's dark, over-written lament of fog and suffocation is undoubtedly an important play. But Orr's enquiry is overblown, his swipe at Beckett critically fatuous, and his inclusion of nuclear war is just rhetoric. The result is a celebration that says more about Orr's enthrallment with bourgeois realism than it does about modern society or the status of O'Neill within twentieth-century theatre.

A consequence of Orr's unwillingness to distance himself from the tragic brew of bourgeois realism is a feeling of unease and irritation: one feels bludgeoned by the narrowness of his principle of selection and boxed in by all the unnecessary mod-planning. Thus, for example, French theatre is never mentioned, presumably because it produced no tragedies of bourgeois alienation, but several pages and much fuss are devoted to the plays of the Irish dramatist F. C. Murray.

A more serious distortion occurs with Brecht. Orr is too informed and intelligent not to recognize the importance of epic theatre and Brecht's critique of illusionism. But he is completely out of sympathy with either the motives or the achievements of Brecht's programme. His isolation of Brecht within a short and

bitty chapter called *Germany's Political Theatre* has the effect of avoiding all the questions by prevailing Brecht's notions from impinging on his own idea of tragedy. He fails to discuss except through easy remarks any single play by Brecht, and treats him backhandedly by examining in detail Gunter Grass's *The Plebeians Rehearse an Uprising* - a clever Brechtian satire on Brecht himself. Now it may be (as Schier) wants to argue in *The Death of Tragedy* that the promise of salvation inherent in Marxism means that Marxism is incapable of providing an ideological or metaphysical backdrop against which "tragedy" can be written - tragedy being about that which cannot be saved. Unfortunately Orr doesn't address the issue, since his uncritical acceptance of the formula "irreparable human loss" begs the question. Much turns on this, which is Brecht's contribution to theatre to have invented a dramatic form in which the all too repairable losses of humanity are able to wear the mask of tragedy. There is great anguish, human loss and waste portrayed in *Mother Courage and her Children*, and if the play doesn't fit Orr's conception of a tragedy, then so much the worse for "tragedy".

Last month saw the publication of *Essays and Studies 1982: The Poet's Power*, collected by Suheil Bushra (124pp. John Murray, for the English Association. £8.50. 0 7195 3930 0). The editor, Professor of English and Anglo-Irish Literature at the American University of Beirut and a specialist of Arabic literature, has obtained contributions that treat the theme of his subtitle through a series of English literatures. Sources of Approimations: by Robert B. Chaucer's Power by Taboo: The Child; The Poet and the Poet's Power by John P. Fitcher; The Appropriation of Milton by Bernard Shaw; "Poetic Warfare" by Claude R. Moore; "The Poet as Prophet" by Kathleen Raine; "Tennyson and Some Doubts" by Alastair Thomson; and "Yeats: The Poet as Hero" by Professor Bushra himself.

One of his few old pictures, "The Story of Ruth", is in the Tate Gallery and an excellent copyist, especially of architecture. He went abroad for Burne-Jones, who died travelling in later life, to copy old buildings in danger of restoration and was "borrowed" by Ruskin in 1884 when he was in Venice. It was the beginning of 1895, however, that Ruskin began to make notes of Burne-Jones's conversation. Ruskin's manuscript has disappeared but a transcript of it by Lady Burne-Jones, consisting of 116 closely written pages, survives. It is one of the best of its kind that Mary Lago has expertly annotated and introduced.

In between brush-strokes

Mary Lutyens

MARY LAGO (Editor)
Burne-Jones Talking, His Conversations 1895-1898: Preserved by his studio assistant Thomas Rooke.
210pp. John Murray. £12.50.
0 7195 3891 2

Burne-Jones's pictures were the first I loved, long before I knew his name. A large engraving of "King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid" hung on the stairs of my grandmother's house; the maidens descending "The Golden Staircase" were all dressed in the Fortuny gowns my mother used to wear; my godmother, Lady Jekyll, was a daughter of William Graham, Burne-Jones's chief patron, and staying with me to live in his ambience, surrounded by his tapestries; the wings of his angels protected me from night-terrors.

Judging from the prices his pictures now fetch in the sale-rooms his art is again in the ascendant. Success did not come to him until the opening of the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877, when he was nearly forty-four, and lasted less than twenty years. He never became a rich man and had to go on working hard until his death, but, then, he would not have cared to go on living without painting.

Thomas Rooke (1842-1942) was Burne-Jones's studio assistant from 1889 until his master's death in 1898, aged sixty-four.

Rooke was a talented watercolourist (one of his few old pictures, "The Story of Ruth", is in the Tate Gallery) and an excellent copyist, especially of architecture. He went abroad for Burne-Jones, who died travelling in later life, to copy old buildings in danger of restoration and was "borrowed" by Ruskin in 1884 when he was in Venice. It was the beginning of 1895, however, that Ruskin began to make notes of Burne-Jones's conversation. Ruskin's manuscript has disappeared but a transcript of it by Lady Burne-Jones, consisting of 116 closely written pages, survives. It is one of the best of its kind that Mary Lago has expertly annotated and introduced.

In 1894 Burne-Jones had accepted a baronetcy for the sake of his ambitious artist son, Philip, and to the disgust of his beloved friend, William Morris, who had become a vociferous socialist. When these recorded conversations start, Burne-Jones was living with his wife, Georgiana Macdonald, whom he married in 1860, in a house with a large garden, The Grange, North End Road, Fulham, where he had two studios. He also owned two cottages knocked into one at Rottingdean. Always tired, frequently ill and hopelessly untidy, he would chatter away to Rooke about anything that came into his head as the two men worked together, often on the same canvas. Rooke made notes of his master's utterances which he afterwards transferred more fully to his notebook.

Burne-Jones was a passionate romantic, nurtured on the Arthurian legends, a worshipper of goodness and beauty, yet no puritan; he complained of George's ugly "Baptist bonnets and frocks" (she was the daughter of a Methodist Minister). He believed in courtly love ("... there is one subject I will not read ever and that is treachery in love - I cannot bear it," he told Rooke), and his own infidelities, though perhaps only of the heart, were anguish to him. He was nearly always in love, while continuing to love George, and for one woman, Mary Zambaco, he almost broke up his home.

Lady Burne-Jones tells us in her *Memorials* that her husband had a beautiful voice; one can believe it, just as one believes that Rooke captured his master's turn of phrase exactly. The conversations show that Burne-Jones had a robust, highly critical, playful side to him in contrast to the idyllic languor of his pictures. This contrast is emphasized in his sketches, mostly self-caricatures, reproduced in this book together with other well-chosen illustrations. He had been elected an Associate Member of the Royal Academy in 1885 but resigned after eight years, never having been granted full membership. He said he had never sold a picture at a gallery in his life. His comment to Rooke - "Lots of pictures that I remember in the Academy that I can't remember in my own mind" - is wonderfully evocative of Victorian stuffiness.

Events of 1895-98 which Burne-Jones comments on are: the Oscar Wilde trial, the Ruskin v. Whistler trial, the Venezuelan border crisis, the Jameson Raid and Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. His anti-imperialism is forcefully expressed: "... the English are, I must say, born pirates. If they'd hoist the Black Flag and skull and cross-bones instead of the Union Jack I'd say be hanged to you and do as you like - but they are such damned hypocrites with it all." He also talked a great deal about his work, past and current, and that of other artists, and discussed on his relationships with Ruskin, Morris and Rossetti. His impressionists he was, naturally,

violently opposed to; the picture he considered "the finest in the world" was Van Eyck's "Arnolfini Marriage". Mary Lago is to be congratulated on bringing to such vivid life this lovable, tender, fallible man who up to the day of his death from heart failure, aged far beyond his years by the violence of his emotions and rejected by the public like "a discarded mistress", as he said, was still striving to bring beauty into an unlovely materialistic world in his great unfinished picture "The Last Sleep of Arthur in Avalon".

Back to the Brotherhood

Kate Flint

CHRISTOPHER WOOD
The Pre-Raphaelites
160pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£18.
0 297 78007 7

The Pre-Raphaelites offer seductive material for a picture book. Their intensity of illumination, their faithfully Ruskinian notation of minute natural detail, their love of patterned textiles and brocade, arranged on crowded canvases whose symbolism overtones allow them to transcend the weary verisimilitude of nineteenth-century narrative painting: all this, in recent years, has become familiar enough. *The Pre-Raphaelites* is beautifully produced and in it Christopher Wood regales us with the old favourites: "Ophelia", "The Herring Shepherd", "The Last of England". Moreover, he rightly attempts to broaden the basis of Pre-Raphaelite study. Instead of prolonging discussion of the original members of the Brotherhood and the impact which their early, spikily Gothic works had on the contemporary scene, he introduces other painters who became converted to their brand of delicate observation with literary mysticism. Arthur Hughes's "April Love" shows him adapting Tennyson's treatment of painful emotion in the modern world. Less well known is the same artist's recourse to the *Idylls of the*

King, central to the Pre-Raphaelite circle: seen in "The Brave Geraint", the hero sentimentally tickles Enid's auburn hair with a bluebell. Romantic medievalism also informs the work of nearly forgotten artists: John S. Clifton's "Lover" shows a lyre-plucking suitor urgently conducting his wooing by the side of an ivy and virginia-creeper covered mausoleum, while, slipping down the social scale, William Windus's "Burd Helen" runs painfully by the side of her simpering, faithless lover across the most barren and stony of Scottish moors.

Wood devotes the central section of his book to Pre-Raphaelite landscape. Again, it is the unfamiliar which makes the greatest impact. Webb's "Twilight", characteristic of the movement in its near-surreal accumulation of meticulously painted minutiae, presents, through the deep emerald gloom, a sinister staring match between rabbit and hawk; Bell Scott's "The Gloaming" has a Friedrich-like intensity about its chilly evening light. But Wood's greatest enthusiasm seems reserved for his examination of the later years of Pre-Raphaelitism and its relationship with the Aesthetic Movement. He writes with emotional reverence of the romantic dreams of Rossetti and Burne-Jones. Clearly, what appeals most is the escapism inherent in Blessed Damozels and Sleeping Princesses surrounded by briar roses; in the alluring gaze of "Waterhouse's" "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" or Strudwick's "The Music of a Bygone Age"; at one point Wood makes his

position clear, by referring, in relation to twentieth-century art, to "the destructive force of modernism".

Visually, *The Pre-Raphaelites* fulfils Wood's aim of presenting a balanced picture of the movement; the lesser-known alongside the established, the later period complementing the earlier. But his prose is flat, his commentary on the familiar often trite. Despite stating in his introduction that an extraordinary amount of literature has hitherto been devoted to the private lives of the artists concerned, this implicit condemnation does not stop him resorting to the stuff of which Pre-Raphaelite gossip columns are made: Lizzie Siddall was called "Guggums" by Rossetti; Ruskin took fight when faced with public bars, to have an affair with a working girl was part of many Victorian artists' code of chivalry. Certainly, as he points out, there is scholarly research still to be done on the movement - on Holman Hunt, Millais and Madox Brown in particular. Perhaps more fascinating than studies of these individuals would be the consideration of a theme relegated by Wood to his postscript: the fall and rise in popularity of Pre-Raphaelite art. He generalizes vaguely, that "we now live in a more romantic age" than our parents did, but never clarifies his reasoning. The key to Pre-Raphaelitism and New Romanticism alike would seem to lie in conspicuous escapism: the author is unlikely to be alone in seeking solace through the material presented in this lavish coffee-table ornament.

All for the republic

Maurice Larkin

J. P. T. Bury

Gambetta's Final Years: "The Era of Difficulties" 1877-1882
392pp. Longman. £18.50.
0 582 50302 7

J. P. T. Bury's trilogy on the life and times of Gambetta is in the steadfast tradition of British political biography. It is meticulous, finely written, and firmly chronological in structure - with general comments and assessments largely confined to the conclusion. Given the author's other commitments and publications, it has been longer in the making than the lifespan of its hero - the first volume appearing in 1936, and the second in 1973.

Reassuringly, the third volume contains few major surprises, its detail and comment largely strengthening the accepted picture of Gambetta. With the hindsight of history and with the knowledge of his early death at forty-four from peritonitis, it is tempting to discount this final stage in his career as a mixture of missed opportunities and initiatives that came to nothing. Yet this is to ignore the importance that contemporaries attached to these activities, and the admiration in which he was held, particularly by his enemies. Bismarck coupled him with Napoleon as one of the great leaders of the French nation - fairly remarking

that neither was French. And the German Emperor, Wilhelm I, on hearing of his death, told his officers, "You can unsaddle your horses, and look forward to a long peace." For Dr Bury, his importance is self-evident: "he played a leading part in defending the provisional Republic in 1870-1, in founding the definitive one in 1875, in defending it again in 1877, and in giving it direction in the years that followed." Yet he held ministerial office for no more than seven and a half months in his lifetime - of which only two and a half in the years covered by this volume, 1877 to 1882. And although the position of President (ie, Speaker) of the Chamber of Deputies carried its own particular prestige and influence, its impact on the course of events was indirect.

Bury carefully examines Gambetta's role as would-be maker and breaker of ministries behind the scenes. Yet his strength of personality and his ability to influence those in office is not easily conveyed, despite his flamboyance and reputation. His force does not permeate his correspondence and recorded utterances as it does with Clemenceau - for all the exuberance of his oratory - and there is a sense in which the modern reader has to take his strength on trust. He was unquestionably feared and obstructed by many of his contemporaries, who accused him of seeking to dominate the system with the intention of reinforcing executive at the expense of the

parliamentary factions. Indeed his own brief term as prime minister was cut short on a modest issue of constitutional reform.

The impression that emerges is of a man of energy, common sense and humanity, but whether he was a man of much intellectual or cultural depth is not revealed in this essentially political study, where the non-political content is largely confined to Gambetta's travels, his loyalty towards friends and relatives, and his state of health. His mistress, Léonie Léon, was both a sustaining influence and a source of anxiety, her periodic pessimism and reluctance to marry him being an unsettling factor during his last years. As to his convictions, he declared in 1876, "I deny the absolute everywhere, and I belong to a school which believes only in the relative, in analysis, in observation, in the study of facts." As Bury says, "For him... the nearest to any absolutes were three basic concepts, universal suffrage, the Republic and the *paix*." "Social reforms *per se* did not loom large on Gambetta's agenda... since he and his friends had always given priority to political reforms, many of which still had to be achieved." He believed that... free compulsory law education [was] "the instrument of emancipation *par excellence*." One would nevertheless have welcomed more information on Gambetta's views on social insurance - notably accident insurance and provision for old age, which he actively espoused

in 1881 and which he partly saw as a means of checking socialism. He was also anxious to facilitate the growth of workers' unions, although, like other eminent statesmen of the left, he did not scruple to use troops to end strikes.

He is consistently revealed as much more flexible and accommodating than the popular image that was held of him. The proclaimer of "Clericalism, there is the enemy!" understood the necessity of establishing a *modus vivendi* with the Church, and thought it possible under the new Pope, Leo XIII - although it was left to Gambetta's disciple, Eugène Spuller, to make it a reality in the 1890s. In similar fashion, his legendary patriotism and commitment to recovering Alsace-Lorraine did not preclude an accommodation with Germany - indeed the two goals might be complementary. One of the many sad tales in these years of disappointment was the long saga of his abortive attempts to have a private meeting with Bismarck - an episode with a wistful pendant, when Gambetta flinched one of the Iron Chancellor's pipes as a souvenir when visiting the great man's residence as a tourist. And if the lost provinces always loomed large in Gambetta's thoughts, they did not prevent him advocating a forward policy in Tunisia and elsewhere, despite accusations that overseas ventures were a distraction from the sacred task of regaining the blue line of the Vosges.

A long biography of a short life leaves plenty of room for background and anecdote. Bury's expertise in the political and diplomatic history of the Third Republic gives the reader a valuable bonus in his survey and analysis of the issues that dominated the period; and the book is rich in piquant and unexpected facts and phrases. For Gambetta the Russian Empire was "barbarism by gas"; and we are told, among much other domestic detail, that his official bedroom when President of the Chamber of Deputies stank, because its previous occupant, the Shah of Persia, used to urinate in the corners. On other pages, we find Gambetta trying hard to obtain a biographic for his mistress's confessor, and inviting her to let him know whom she wanted decorated, "for in these days of cheap favours one can't stake one's claims too soon".

Dr Bury is no less forthcoming on Gambetta's posthumous career. His spiritual legacy was a disputed one: Opportunists and Radicals fought over different strands of his democratic ideals, while the Nationalists laid claim to his patriotism. His body suffered the same fate. His brain went to the Laboratoire de l'Ecole de l'Anthropologie, his heart to the Pantheon, his right eye to the Cahors museum to be displayed in a bottle, and what was left was allowed to lie in Nice. Dr Bury's prime achievement is to show us what they all added up to in his lifetime, before the warring factions got hold of them.

The style of the left

Steven Englund

Patrick H. Hutton

The Cult of the Revolutionary Tradition: The Blanquists in French Politics, 1864-1893
218pp. University of California Press. £17.25.
0 520 04114 3

To study the republican parties and their ideology of *la nation* in France in the 150 years following the Great Revolution, is to pass from "cloyen" to "bourgeois", or, simply, from left to right. Patrick Hutton travels the well-known route, but with new companions, the Blanquists, that very French variant of the pre-Marxist conspiratorial revolutionary. They reward him with an almost theatrical evolution - from the radical atheism of Gustave Tridon in the 1860s through Communist nationalism and Boulangerism to the national socialism of Ernest Granger in the 1890s.

Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881), the earliest of the "professional revolutionaries" was one of the most prepossessing ideologues ever to emerge on the left. The heat of his commitment kindled sympathetic fires in the hearts of many hundreds of disciples and abettors - few of whom laid eyes on the Master, who spent most of his life in French prisons. Interlarded with biographical sketches of individual Blanquists with analysis of larger contexts and doctrines, Hutton describes the elements of the Blanquist revolutionary myth - the archetypal hero, conspiratorial praxis, gnostic meanings, "sacred" places and rituals; revolutionary Urgencies; Evil incarnate in political enemies, and other bigger-mugger - then undertakes to show what became of it all.

En route he debunks some received wisdom. As he shows, atheism was not antagonistic to Blanquism; but a central and rich source of political inspiration. The party did not play a major role in the Commune - which, it saw as, "an atheist drama", says Hutton - though a few of its leaders figured significantly in the army and police and were largely responsible for the Commune's acts of vengeance on its hostages.

In the late 1870s, the party broke with the Marxists over how to interpret the Commune, and in the 1890s it weighed itself down with what Hutton calls "the politics of

anniversary remembrance" - "a dubious source of energy for new beginnings". The Blanquists helped to create the left-wing movement that pressured the Chamber to vote an amnesty for exiled Communards and played a major role in forcing President Grévy's resignation in 1887. The attraction of what Hutton calls "the new mass politics" led the Blanquists into electoral Boulangerism in 1889. When it became apparent that the movement was more caesarist than Jacobin, the Blanquists split between the Marxist followers of Vaillant and the obstinate traditionalists led by Granger. The former more or less merged with the Guesdists; the latter, though getting a few of their leaders into the Chamber, lost their corporate existence in the radical *fin-de-siècle* right.

The author writes at the start that "the study of revolutionary thought is of interest not only for its particular ideologies but also for its underlying mentalities and remains true to this innovation. In other words, we have before us the very model of modern political historiography: a book about 'the archaic revolutionary mentality'. Hutton's strength is as a historian: resides in his sensitivity to ideological and personal nuance, and to Clio's irony towards men's intentions. His book offers a fascinating and affecting, often elegant, portrait of earnest youthfulness that lives on into senescent caricature.

This said, the author's fascination with style is finally less fruitful than trendy. Hutton writes in Chapter Eight "The Blanquists and Style in Revolutionary Politics" that "Blanqui's life was valued not for his specific accomplishments but for the authenticity of [his] style." He is quick to remark upon the "religious character" of Blanquist dogma, rituals and traditions. Amidst all this cultural anthropology, however, we get too little cogent socio-political analysis. On the contrary, Hutton, like many of the *Annales* historians, risks deprecating his subject - a serious failing, when he is striving to explicate a political party acting in the political arena.

This approach fails most evidently in the chapter dealing with the Boulanger Affair (1887-1891). With the revisionist historians, Hutton sees this entire crucial episode as a left-wing protest - i.e. the way some of the original "Boulangist" leadership saw the movement (or made it out to be). This is rather like saying (with Renzo de Felice) that Mussolini was

still a revolutionary after 1920. At other times, Hutton simply elides the vital question of the movement's politics by speaking of "the new mass politics", or of "nationalism", or of Boulangerism's "revolutionary" thrust - as if such terms carried self-evident political meanings. This elision is unacceptable. Hutton seriously misleads when he states so downheartedly that "Blanquist allegiance to Boulangerism is therefore not at issue." Of course it is: the Blanquist party fell apart over nothing less. Hutton finds it "ironic that the most ardent advocate among the Blanquists of the new politics [Vaillant] should have been the first to recoil from its implications when these were revealed in the Boulangerist movement". Vaillant's action is only "ironic" if one has, a priori, excluded the counter-revolutionary thrust of "the new politics", as Hutton does. But from another perspective, that of many left-wing critics of Boulangerism - it was merely an act of discriminating intelligence to desecrate and deny those elements which showed that Boulangerism was not, as Hutton supposes, the "configuration of protest [like] those which had preceded the revolutions of 1830 and 1848". Socialists like Vaillant did not break with their old comrades-in-arms over matters of tactics, as Hutton believes; rather, the Vaillantists (among other socialists) saw early on what patriotism was becoming to the hands of the League of Patriots and of the recrudescence, "democratic" and "national" right. They denounced to their colleagues the Boulangerist-Bonapartist alliance, and they early suspected the royalists' financial support of Boulanger.

Moreover, those socialists who did break with Boulanger must be studied on a case-by-case basis, not simply labelled "Boulangists" as Hutton labels them here. The results will show that the so-called socialist wing of the movement was among the last to take shape, the least coherent, the first to collapse, and provided the most circumscribed and acutely self-conscious support that Boulanger "enjoyed". Even Roche and Granger were loath to call themselves Boulangerists and were as troubled by the movement's ambivalent attitude towards strikes and unions as they were by Boulanger's and Déroulède's record fighting against the Commune. The life of the political animal is both more subtle and more substantial than *Annales*-type history (usually) permits.

As well as studying the social composition and morale of these soldiers, and recognizing the paucity of evidence that would enable us to penetrate their minds and hearts, Dr Tombs makes all the use he can of clues to their likely attitudes. He is on more solid ground in studying the high-ranking officers who, after the March 18 fraternization with the Parisian populace, never lost sight of

Agents of repression

Eugene Schulkind

Robert Tombs

The War Against Paris 1871
256pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50 (paperback, £8.50).
0 521 23551 0

With the detachment of a decade one can more readily gain an overall view of the publications generated in the years immediately following the centenary of the 1871 Paris Commune. With a few notable exceptions, most of the books published in Britain have tended to repeat or recast traditional arguments and evidence ranging from the significant to the anecdotal. On the other hand, important original contributions have occasionally emerged from patient research carried out by little-known scholars. The most outstanding (as yet unpublished) example is undoubtedly the brilliant dissertation of 1981 in which Paul Martinez brought together the results of thorough and meticulous research among British and French documentary sources in order to analyse the lives of thousands of individual Parisian men and women who found refuge in Britain during the eight or nine-year period following the Commune's defeat.

This more modest but carefully researched and intelligently argued study by Robert Tombs, of the soldiers and officers of the Versailles army, also required an uncommonly open and perceptive mind. This army, and especially its role in the repression of the *semaine sanglante*, has generally been characterized simply as a reactionary body of men who indulged in a gratuitous blood-bath; its indiscriminate cruelty exaggerated perhaps by the heat of battle. This is merely the reverse side of the historiographical coin which the same old impulsive Parisian "mob" that has supposedly been associated with revolutionary events there since 1789.

As well as studying the social composition and morale of these soldiers, and recognizing the paucity of evidence that would enable us to penetrate their minds and hearts, Dr Tombs makes all the use he can of clues to their likely attitudes. He is on more solid ground in studying the high-ranking officers who, after the March 18 fraternization with the Parisian populace, never lost sight of

the potential political unreliability of their men and of some of the junior officers. This has led him to pay attention also to the extent of disaffection and outright dissent among the soldiers, and the means by which these were dealt with. In short, Tombs traces the systematic transformation of these regiments from troops ready to fraternize into the obedient military agents of one of the "bloodiest repressions in the history of Europe".

He also debates how far killing was engendered by the heat of combat or was, instead, a deliberate act of termination carefully organized by certain officers and the special police attached to military units. Inevitably, he is brought to examine the extent to which Thiers and some of the generals were involved in, or at least fully aware of the preparation and execution of the slaughter, as well as the extent to which the government was affected by foreign criticism of the intensity of the repression.

Tombs is apparently one of those rare historians who strive to write with no greater certainty in drawing inferences than the available evidence permits. How unfortunate, then, are his careless, apparently unverified, comments about Karl Marx's alleged modification of his interpretation of the Commune between the 1871 Civil War in France and the famous letter of February 22, 1881, to Domela-Nieuwenhuis. Had Tombs relied directly on these and other of Marx's writings on the Commune, instead of John Pakenham's excerpts from them in John Pakenham, he would at once have known that Marx never ceased to believe (a) that any insurrection at a time when the victorious Prussian Army surrounded Paris could not succeed, (b) that under the circumstances was a compromise, unprincipled pragmatism, or replaced by a positive image of a Church which marks the site of a sacramental mid-point between heaven and earth. The "animating case" of equivocation is writing itself, which is the central equivocal subject of *The Temple*. Asale invokes the context of Biblical tradition, according to which the "letter" of the old law is superseded by the "spirit" of the new. Quoting Colossians 2.14, where Christ is described as "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us", he shows that while the Puritans showed this as announcing the abolition of the ordinance of "handwriting" (ie, ceremonies), the Roman church "Herbert" believed,

Politique et religion (413pp. Paris: Gallimard. 2.06 035457 1) private the proceedings of the 20th Conference of French-speaking Jewish intellectuals

Adding fancy to facts

Katherine Duncan-Jones

Clarke Hulise

Metamorphic Verse
296pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £15.80.
0 691 06483 0

Elizabethan poets were apt to think, as Browning did, that "Fancy with fact is just one fact the more." Their poetic reconstructions of such wronged or wrongdoing figures as Fair Rosamund or Piers Gaveston were probably felt to have as much emotional and aesthetic validity as dramatic renderings of Brutus or Richard II. Indeed, perhaps it was the limitations which boy actors imposed on the exploration of female consciousness on the stage, as well as the precedents set by Ovid's *Heroides* and Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, that made so many Elizabethan writers of the 1590s choose to make female figures central in their "minor epics" - Venus, Hero, Lucrece, Elstred, Matilda and so on. Clark Hulise, in this interesting but extremely confused rag-bag of a book, does not make any connections between "minor epic" and drama, for he is a great compartmentalizer. Nor does he see the many authors of "Complaints" as simply reworking the *De Casibus* tradition - nothing for him is simple. He makes heavy weather of the aesthetic and historical theories underpinning the poems he calls "minor epics". Drayton's *Piers Gaveston*, for instance, is seen as

straddling two unconnected notions of truth, both narrative, but one particular, historical, and based on the authority of others, the other mythic, poetical, and based on Drayton's own insight. The key to his reconciliation of the two lies in his intent to navigate through the shoals of fact by the compass of possibility, thereby

Heavenly homonyms

Raman Selden

Heather A. R. Asale

Equivocal Predication: George Herbert's Way to God
145pp. University of Toronto Press. £24.50.
0 8020 5536 2

This book is a labour of love. Heather Asale follows Herbert's "Way to God" along the narrow defiles of his poetic language. She argues that verbal equivocation (pun, homonymy) is the linguistic means by which Herbert brings together the earthly and the heavenly, the sacramental, use of language "brings down from heaven the ontological presence of the Being of God". The book is based on the assumption that "for Herbert truth is located in the sound-conspiracy of language itself expressed as the Name of God: (I AM)". The various kinds of equivocation found in the poetry are divided into five "cases", which constitute the "declassification" of equivocation.

The book is a subtle tribute to Herbert's Anglican middle way. The negative connotations of equivocation (equivocation, unprincipled pragmatism, or replaced by a positive image of a Church which marks the site of a sacramental mid-point between heaven and earth. The "animating case" of equivocation is writing itself, which is the central equivocal subject of *The Temple*. Asale invokes the context of Biblical tradition, according to which the "letter" of the old law is superseded by the "spirit" of the new. Quoting Colossians 2.14, where Christ is described as "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us", he shows that while the Puritans showed this as announcing the abolition of the ordinance of "handwriting" (ie, ceremonies), the Roman church "Herbert" believed,

suggesting a notion of verisimilitude as the proper channel for poetic history.

But was Drayton really as clever as this? He had not had the advantage of reading Tzvetan Todorov, of notes tell us Hulise has done, and I find it hard to believe that he was much troubled by these complexities. Antiquarian gleanings and poetic imaginings went fairly serenely hand in hand for many authors in this period, as Sidney suggests they should in *Defence of Poetry*. The messy injustice of actual historical events can only be enhanced by the poet, who makes them orderly and didactic.

This is only one of many sections of the book where Hulise sets up a veritable gallery of Aunt Sallies. In a chapter entitled "Petrarchan Rhetoric", for instance, he has this to say:

The assimilation of Petrarchism as its vocabulary gave the minor epic its unique position... as socially central and morally marginal, and it created a dilemma for the middle-class poet such as Daniel or Shakespeare who found himself more vulnerable morally than he could ever be secure socially.

Define "Petrarchism", one longs to exclaim: define "minor epic", define "middle-class", define "vulnerable". For Hulise gets through the chapter without citing a single specific poem or image of Petrarch's - and if he is really sure that he can distinguish clearly, in this period, between what is "moral" and what merely "social", I am sure we should all like to know more about how he does it. Hulise seems consistently to tackle problems that we would never guess were there if he hadn't told us. When we read, for instance, that Spenser "speaks in *periphrasis* and begs his reader to decode his rhetoric", we can guess what sort of critics our author has been reading, but we are scarcely the wiser about *Mulopotmos*.

Heavenly homonyms

Raman Selden

Heather A. R. Asale

Equivocal Predication: George Herbert's Way to God
145pp. University of Toronto Press. £24.50.
0 8020 5536 2

The unspoken metaphysical foundation of the book is everywhere apparent. Throughout, opposites (head and body, letter and spirit, heavenly and earthly, God and man, sign and meaning) are unified in moments of full presence, in which the NOW of reading joins the eternity of the WORD. For example, in "Heaven", the mortal speaker's questions are answered by a divine "Echo", whose replies are derived from the questioner's own words. The homonyms (natural "leaves" become holy "leaves" - ie, the Bible) form a bridge between heaven and earth. The poet-preacher sacramentalizes language by breaking it (as the priest breaks the host) and makes it whole again (in the I AM of God). Asale writes of the "content" of the homonym binding the many in the one.

The author herself recognizes that she has written in "a mixed genre of (theology-criticism)", she wishes to inaugurate a tradition in Herbert criticism which will draw upon the extensive body of seventeenth-century theological hermeneutics. One is struck by the similarity of terminology and concepts between the many late-seventeenth-century texts discussed and modern structuralism and semiotics. It is surprising that Asale has overlooked, for example, all reference to Jakobson on metaphor and metonymy, and to Saussure on signifiers and signifieds. This is partly because she is concerned with providing a strictly historical reading of the tradition of Martin Campbell on "The Poetic: Queen" and K. K. Rutherford on "Critics and Cryptomorphs: Observations on the Concept of Hidden Form".

There are many genuine problems posed by the poems - Ovidian epylla and complaints - which Hulise brackets together as "minor epics". (Actually, though most of the poems are minor, only a very few bear any relation to epic, even in miniature or in stylistic allusion.) A fundamental problem is that of *tone*. The comic or even satiric treatment of classical myth in *Hero and Leander* and *Venus and Adonis* - the morbid cultivation of pathos in *The Rape of Lucrece* and *The Complaint of Rosamund* - these are puzzles to which Hulise does not address himself. Indeed, when he says of *Mulopotmos*, "One might even be taken in by the epic pomp of Spenser's *otava rima* if the joke were not given away in the title", he betrays a lack of humour which comes close to obtuseness, as he does also in his solemnly laborious demonstration that the Marlowe of *Hero and Leander* was inspired by *furor poeticus*. A broader question is that of why these poems were written at all, and why a poem such as Daniel's *Rosamund* was so much admired. But we shall not find the answers here.

Though heavily footnoted, the book has no bibliography, so there is no complete list of the poems which Hulise considers to be "minor epics". Some which would seem to qualify according to his criteria, such as Lodge's *Complaint of Elstred*, do not rate a mention. The book is fairly lavishly illustrated, but such intriguing iconographical questions as the relationship of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* to Titian's are handled with tantalizing superficiality. I cannot understand how Hulise can maintain that the artefact gazed on by Shakespeare's Lucrece is "a tapestry" when Shakespeare uses the word "point" or "painter" at least a dozen times. Like many late-Victorian commentators, he seems unwilling to credit Shakespeare with enough imagination to reconstruct, even with Virgil's help, a painting he could not have seen in real life.

Heavenly homonyms

Raman Selden

Heather A. R. Asale

Equivocal Predication: George Herbert's Way to God
145pp. University of Toronto Press. £24.50.
0 8020 5536 2

Even if one can participate on such terms, there must be reservations about the book's overall impact. By adopting Herbert's own equivocating style, Asale buries the reader in a web of scholastic word-play. The complex "argument" of equivocation turns out to be a scholastic series of variations on a single proposition: "Equivocation offers a re-creation of the paradigm rendered by the Incarnation: man and God in one". Without this, the whole edifice collapses into the fragments of language the book seeks to unite in the Word. In other words, this reading of Herbert is essentially an act of worship, and as such is a finely performed ceremony.

Modern Philology: a journal devoted to research in medieval and modern literature, Volume 79, Number 3, February 1982 (University of Chicago Press: Four issues per year. Annual subscription, \$30 for institutions; \$20 for individuals) contains articles by Robert E. Lewis on "The English 'Fableau' Tradition and Chaucer's Miller's Tale"; "Providential Theme and Symbolic Pattern in *Paradise Lost*, Book 3"; William H. Young on "Addison and the Birth of Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics"; and Peter Collier on "A Postlude to Gladstone on Robert Bunsen: Four Unpublished Letters". The current issue of *Southern Review*, Volume 15, Number 1, March 1982 (University of Adelaide, South Australia: Three issues per year. Annual subscription, \$A13.50 for institutions; \$A10.50 for individuals) includes essays by Martin Campbell on "Spenser's *Mulpolita Cantata* and the End of *The Faerie Queene*"; and K. K. Rutherford on "Critics and Cryptomorphs: Observations on the Concept of Hidden Form".

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Researcher

We require a Researcher to work on a series of lectures on the History of Britain, made by the feature department for Channel Four.

The Researcher will provide background information for the presenter, will help sub-edit the talks, as required, and will locate visual material suitable to illustrate each lecture.

A degree in British History and experience in publishing or television is essential.

Please write with full CV to Helen Auty, Staff Officer, London Weekend Television, South Bank Television Centre, Kent House, Upper Ground, London SE1 9LT.

An equal opportunities employer

LVN/TT

London Weekend Television



RE-ISSUE

CITY OF LONDON

Deputy Director of Libraries and Art Galleries

Salary: From £15,825 to £17,604 per annum inclusive

Applicants with considerable relevant experience are invited to apply for the post of Deputy to the Guildhall Librarian, Director of Libraries and Art Galleries.

The service, based in Guildhall Library, includes the City Business Library, St. Bride Printing Library, a lending library system and two art galleries (including the new library and art gallery in the Barbican Arts and Conference Centre).

Although experience of major reference libraries and archives is important, the main emphasis of duties is on central administration and supervision of the lending library service.

Further details and form of application from: Guildhall Librarian, Aldermanbury, London EC2P 2EJ. Closing date for applications: 26th June, 1982.

THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

Classified Advertisement Rates

Display on Classified Pages
Single column centimetre £6.75
Minimum space: 9cm x 5.6cm £40.75

Copy date
7 days preceding publication

Language
All classifications £1.35 per line
Minimum 3 lines £4.05

Copy date
5 days preceding publication

Box number facilities £2.00

*Except Librarian Appointments

Librarian Appointments

Display on Classified Pages
Single column centimetre £6.00
Minimum space: 9cm x 5.6cm £34.00

Copy date
7 days preceding publication

Language
All classifications £1.20

Minimum 3 lines £3.60

Copy date
5 days preceding publication

Box number facilities £2.00